The Paleblood Hunt

A Bloodborne Analysis

by “Redgrave”

Dedicated to all those with a story to tell

I didn't really like Dark Souls. Objectively speaking, it's a great game. The gameplay is solid; the world is compelling; the characters are interesting. Maybe it's because, Demon's Souls fanatic that I was, I had hyped the game up in my mind to such impossibly high standards that there was no way it could compete with my expectations. But I always found that there was something missing in Dark Souls: the unknown.

The story of Dark Souls is certainly mysterious; the game avoided conventional storytelling and instead gave the player the burden of uncovering the truth on their own. One could pull back the curtain of Anor Londo and discover the machinations of Gwyndolin and Frampt, or bring the Lordvessel to Kaathe and learn of another layer to the story. Even so, the story of Dark Souls was all too grounded for me. It was the kind of story that could be re-arranged and presented as fact, with all of the mysteries solved like a novel where, at the end of the book, the brilliant detective goes over the evidence to the rest of the characters and makes all the connections for them.

Demon's Souls had been different. In Demon's Souls, the answers hadn't been there. It's no mystery that the concept of Souls Lorehunting didn't really exist with Demon's Souls other than a few notable exceptions like GuardianOwl. The only real topic of debate was whether or not the Old One was the God of the Church. But there was no answer to whether the Monumental was good or evil; there was no explanation for how Biorr's armor could be found in Miralda's well; the mysteries behind Lord Rydell and the Old Monk remained void of answers. They were unknown.

Hidetaka Miyazaki, the genius behind the Souls franchise, grew up in poverty in the city of Shizuoka. Unable to afford any means of entertaining himself, Miyazaki would spend most of his childhood reading books found in his local library. He was fascinated with western tales of fiction, but his English was not fluent enough to understand every single word. Many times he would read a story and find that he couldn't understand half of it, and so he would connect the words he could find and fill in the blanks, forming a story of his own that used the pieces that had been laid out before him.

I've read many criticisms of Bloodborne's story when compared with Dark Souls. Many people find that the

characters are empty, that the story isn't as entertaining, or that the plot doesn't seem to be as rich when compared to the tale of Gwyn and the First Flame. And they're right. Bloodborne, like Demon's Souls before it, doesn't have the answers to be solved within the game itself. There's no dialogue or item description which can provide the player with that crucial piece of information that explains everything. There's no brilliant detective who can explain it for someone in a condensed manner. Bloodborne is a book where half of the words can't be understood, and the reader must fill in the blanks on their own.

When I first wrote The Paleblood Hunt, I wrote that there was a singular truth we could discover. Seven months later, having read so many different interpretations and discussion on the game's story, having discussed the plot with so many different people, I can only now see how absurd that the idea of a singular story had been. There is no answer to Bloodborne's story. Bloodborne is a game that asks you what YOU think. It asks you what YOUR story is. What do YOU make of the unknown? This is my story. This is my Eldritch Truth.

"The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown."

-Howard Phillips Lovecraft

Supernatural Horror in Literature, 1927

Chapter One: Byrgenwerth, Kos, and The Vacuous Spider

"Byrgenwerth is an old place of learning. And the tomb of the gods, carved out below Yharnam, should be familiar to every hunter. Well, once a group of young Byrgenwerth scholars discovered a holy medium deep within the tomb. This led to the founding of the Healing Church, and the establishment of blood healing. In this sense, everything sacred in Yharnam can be traced back to Byrgenwerth."

-Alfred, Vileblood Hunter

Everything begins at Byrgenwerth. An old institution of learning, Byrgenwerth was built in a peaceful, secluded area away from the neighboring city and close to a great lake. It is here that a group of individuals studied and explored the depths of human knowledge.

For starters, I will use only information and evidence that can be found inside of the game. I will save my personal interpretations and beliefs for the end, so that you can make up your own mind about the evidence presented.

There were many students at Byrgenwerth. There were, however certain individuals of note other than the students, figures of importance who formed the inner circle so to speak. While not all of them were scholars, for the purpose of this analysis I refer to this group of individuals as The Byrgenwerth Scholars, or The Scholars for short.

Those individuals who we can safely conclude were members of The Scholars consisted of Willem, Laurence, Micolash, and Carryl.

Master Willem was the head of the academy and a highly respected figure. All characters who refer to Willem specifically refer to **Master** Willem, indicating a deep respect for the figure even if they had differences in beliefs. There is also a reference found on the Rune Workshop Tool which refers to him

as **Provost** Willem. A Provost is an administrator of an academic facility which supports placing Willem as the head of the academy and the leading figure. Master Willem's primary focus of study concerned the limits of human intelligence.

Laurence is a much more enigmatic figure, especially for a character so important. From the Beast skull in the Grand Cathedral, the PC Hunter witnesses a memory of an encounter between Laurence and Willem, in which Willem accuses the younger Laurence of betraying him. A note left on the Cathedral staircase reads: *"Place your hand on the altar's sacred covering, and inscribe Master Laurence's adage upon your flesh."* That Laurence would be revered so highly infers that he must have been a very significant figure in the Healing Church. It is well documented that the Healing Church has its roots in Byrgenwerth College. The Byrgenwerth Student Uniform states:

The Healing Church has its roots in Byrgenwerth, and naturally borrows heavily from its uniform design. The focus not on knowledge. or thought. but on pure pretension would surely bring Master Willem to despair, if only he knew."

Laurence's title is that of the First Vicar, given to him both by the Human Skull of the Nightmare and in his boss fight, confirming this idea that Laurence was in fact one of the Church's founders, splitting from Byrgenwerth in an event that I will later describe as The Schism.

Micolash, the boss encountered in the Nightmare of Mensis, was another Scholar, as evidenced by the tattered Byrgenwerth uniform he wears during the PC Hunter's fight against him; Micolash also makes references to other parts of Byrgenwerth, which I will discuss later.

Caryll was a genius runesmith who, through unknown methods, could listen to the scratchings and utterings of the Great Ones. While she could not understand the inhuman words they spoke, she managed to etch them into visual symbols that could be identified. The Rune Workshop Tool describes Caryll

as: *"Runesmith Caryll, student of Byrgenwerth, transcribed the inhuman utterings of the Great Ones into what are now called Caryll Runes."*

There are also two individuals whom we can **believe** to have been a member of The Scholars: Gehrman and Maria.

Gehrman was most assuredly an acquaintance of both Laurence and Willem. After the PC Hunter defeats Rom, The Vacuous Spider, they can find Gehrman whimpering in his sleep. *"Oh, Laurence... Master Willem... Somebody help me..."* Gehrman is also, as we know, the First Hunter. He founded the Workshop, located in a hidden section of the Upper Cathedral Ward, and presumably worked with the Church in its infancy. Judging from Gehrman's combat proficiency and master craftsmanship he may have been a bodyguard for tomb excavations, a groundskeeper, or a handyman for the college at large.

Maria was Gehrmans' greatest pupil, and judging from the fact that she takes over the Research Hall of the Healing Church it's possible that she was a student at the College under Laurence. Regardless, her participation in the events which would take place at the Hamlet place her as a member of the Byrgenwerth Scholars prior to its schism.

We can now look at The Scholars, having explored each one individually, as a collective unit. Willem, Laurence, Micolash, Gehrman, Maria, and Carryl were individuals at the Byrgenwerth College, an institution dedicated to the furthering of knowledge and the exploration of the massive Labyrinth built underground. It was in this Labyrinth that the scholars made the discovery that put every event in Bloodborne into motion. Indeed, the entire history of Bloodborne can be traced to a single defining moment, in which The Scholars discovered something deep inside the ancient Pthumerian Crypts. The Executioner Alfred muses that *"Once a group of young Byrgenwerth scholars discovered a holy medium deep within the tomb. This led to the founding of the Healing Church, and the establishment of blood healing."* Deep inside the Labyrinth, the Scholars discovered the Old Blood. It is unclear exactly what was found, but in the upper level of the

Byrgenwerth mansion we can find the Empty Phantasm Shell. *"Empty invertebrate shell that is said to be a familiar of a Great One. The Healing Church has discovered a great variety of invertebrates, or phantasms, as they are called."* Whatever was found, it was proof of the existence of the Great Ones. It's possible that The Scholars discovered Ebrietas, the abandoned and left-behind Great One who would later commune with the Healing Church. They certainly discovered a source of the Old Blood, the tainted Blood of the Great Ones. Whether it was Ebrietas or something else is unclear.

With the discovery of the Old Blood and of the Great Ones, everything changed. Evolution became the goal; push the limits of humanity and become something greater. Ascend to the level of the Great Ones, push humanity into its next stage. A scribbled note found in the Nightmare Lecture Hall reads: *"Master Willem was right. Evolution without courage will be the ruin of our race."* However it quickly became apparent that some of The Scholars, and Laurence in particular, differed in their belief on how the evolution should be carried out. Carryl's Eye Rune states: *"Eyes symbolize the truth Master Willem sought in his research. Disillusioned by the limits of human intellect. Master Willem looked to beings from higher planes for guidance, and sought to line his brain with eyes in order to elevate his thoughts."* However, Carryl's Metamorphosis Runes state: *"The discovery of blood made their dream of evolution a reality. Metamorphosis, and the excesses and deviation that followed, was only the beginning."*

There are two different resources that the Player collects during their time in Bloodborne: Blood Echoes, and Insight. The Echoes is the method in which the PC Hunter gains power, while Insight is the method in which the PC Hunter gains knowledge. While some at Byrgenwerth believed that knowledge and understanding of the Great Ones and the higher planes of existence would lead to humanity's uplifting, others believed that it was through the imbibing and fusing with the Old Blood that would lead to humanity's ascension. This was a concept anathema to everything Willem stood for.

Fear the Old Blood

These two fundamentally opposed philosophies would lead to The Byrgenwerth Schism. But there's another piece of the puzzle.

Upon entering the Fishing Hamlet in the Hunter's Nightmare, the PC Hunter is greeted by a Fish Kin, muttering to himself. *"Byrgenwerth... Byrgenwerth... Blood-crazed murderers. Blasphemous fiends."* If the player is wearing the Milkweed Rune, the Kin will give them the Accursed Brew, a skull which states: *"Skull of a local from the violated fishing village. The inside of the skull was forcibly searched for eyes, as evidenced by innumerable scratches and indentations."* Whatever happened in the Fishing Hamlet must have had to do with Kos, the Great One found at the end of the area. Kos is apparently dead, and while the Hunter battles her Orphan, the Great One is long since past. Other than the mutterings of the Fish Kin, there is only one other reference to Kos, that of Micolash in his commune with the cosmos. *"Ahh, Kos, or some say Kosm... Do you hear our prayers? As you once did for the vacuous Rom, grant us eyes, grant us eyes."*

Rom, as the PC Encounters, is a large creature who is found at the bottom of the Moonside Lake of Byrgenwerth. Rom's title is that of the Vacuous Spider, and is shown to be very relatively weak. Rom's only real strength comes from the Spider Kin she can spawn to defend herself. Other than that she is barely capable of defending herself either through carelessly hurling shards of energy, or thrashing wildly at her enemy.

When the player encounters Rom it is the defining moment in which the story of Bloodborne goes from a narrative of hunting Beasts, to a sudden understanding that we, the player, have barely even scratched the surface of a much, much darker truth. But Rom is not a fully developed Great One. Micolash, in his communing with the cosmos, mutters: *"As you once did for the vacuous Rom, grant us eyes, grant us eyes. Plant eyes on our brains, to cleanse our beastly idiocy."* Rom was not always a Great One. Eyes planted on her brain to cleanse her idiocy, Rom ascended to **become** one.

Vacuous is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as: **Having or showing a lack of thought or intelligence; mindless.** The word comes from the Latin *vacuus* meaning **empty**, along with the suffix *-ous*, meaning **by the nature of.**

Where does Rom come from? Who is she? What is her relation to the dead Great One, Kos?

What follows is purely my own interpretation and belief based on the evidence I have gathered. Do not consider any of this as solid fact. Instead, use it as my interpretation, so that you can gather your own beliefs.

In Byrgenwerth, Master Willem and his students toiled away to excavate the Pthumerian Labyrinth underground, studying their Gods and exploring the depths of human intellect. The Byrgenwerth Scholars made two major breakthroughs in their study. Their first major discovery was the Old Blood, specifically the blood of a Great One. It's possible that this Great One was Ebrietas, as in the Byrgenwerth Lecture Hall we can discover the Augur of Ebrietas, and we also find an Empty Phantasm Shell in the upper chamber of the Byrgenwerth Mansion.

The second great discovery was Kos. When I first played The Old Hunters DLC, my initial impression had been that it was the Byrgenwerth Scholars who had killed Kos. When I shared this theory, many people pointed to the description of the Kos Parasite, which states: "*When the carcass of Kos washed up on the coast, its insides were teeming with tiny parasites, unlike any found in humans.*" The argument was that this gave evidence to the fact that Kos had actually been dead prior to the encounter with Byrgenwerth, having washed up on the coast of the Fishing Village. I was unsure about my conclusion, and couldn't decide which theory was more accurate until I played through the DLC a second time, and encountered Maria. Her words, now that I had seen the entire picture, made much more sense.

"A corpse... should be left well alone. Oh, I know very well. How the secrets beckon so sweetly."

When I first encountered Maria, I had naturally assumed she was talking about her own corpse. Now that I had seen what lay beyond her care, everything fell into place. As I wandered around the Fishing Hamlet, taking a look at its design and features, I came to a new conclusion. Look at how the Kin of the Hamlet throw their harpoons; how the Giants wield massive anchors; how the wrecks of mighty vessels line the coast. This isn't some quaint fishing village, **it's a whaling town.** Prior to the release of the DLC, many players had noted the strange masts sticking out of the water in the Nightmare Frontier. We can now see the origin of these vessels, the Hamlet. The villagers must have sighted the Great One Kos in the sea one day, rising up and taking arms to kill what they must have perceived as a monster. They hunted and killed her, losing many of their whaling ships in the process but inevitably returning home victorious, having sent the creature back to the sea. But one day, the corpse of the dead Great One washed ashore. When the villagers investigated the corpse they found it teeming with parasites, which soon infected and took over the minds and bodies of the villagers, transforming them into the Kin that we encounter them as.

Inevitably, word reached Byrgenwerth of the Dead God on the Hamlet. They sent two individuals to investigate the Hamlet: Gehrman and Maria. The announcement trailer featured Gehrman with his scythe extended, walking into the Hamlet, and we find Rakuyo, Maria's weapon, in the Hamlet well. Gehrman, the First Hunter, traveled along with his greatest pupil Maria to the Hamlet and **butchered** the Kin. The skulls were split open in search of eyes, and the First Hunters carved a path towards the corpse of Kos. It is there that their greatest blasphemy was committed. The elevator to the Healing Church Research Hall depicts three statues hovering over a child, examining it. The central figure is clearly a depiction of Master Willem, featuring the same robes and hat as the Provost's.

Gehrman and Maria discovered that the dead Kos had been pregnant, the unborn fetus still intact. A very important rule of

Bloodborne's world is that even if an individual dies in the Waking World, their consciousness may still remain in the Dreamlands. This is something that will come up time and time again, and is evidenced by the existence of Micolash's corpse in the Waking World. The unborn, murdered Great One was brought back to the Byrgenwerth college and dissected in the name of science. What was retrieved was a Cord of the Eye, the Orphan's umbilical cord.

And it was then that Master Willem, the greatest mind of Byrgenwerth, had an epiphany. Willem is quoted in the description of the Great One's Wisdom as having stated: *"We are thinking on the basest of planes. What we need, are more eyes."* The Eye is indeed the symbol representing not just Insight in the Player's HUD, but also the knowledge of the higher planes of existence and of the Great Ones.

The discovery of the Great Ones and the Old Blood split The Scholars into two opposing factions. One I have dubbed the Loyalists, led by Master Willem. The Loyalists believed in evolution through Eyes, the accumulation of insight that would let humanity ascend. This faction consisted of Willem and his students. The other faction, which I have dubbed the Radicals, was led by Laurence. The Radicals believed in evolution through Blood, the accumulation of power that would let humanity ascend. This faction consisted of Laurence, Micolash, Gehrman, and Maria. While there was never any violence between these two groups, the fundamental difference in philosophy led to them inevitably separating to go their own paths. While the Loyalists remained at Byrgenwerth, the Radicals founded the Healing Church in the pursuit of further spreading their knowledge of the Old Blood. This schism was not also purely among The Scholars, but also amongst the student populous, with many leaving along with the Radicals.

With the Healing Church founding and flourishing, Willem and the remaining Loyalists were no doubt concerned with the growing power and the threat they posed. The Loyalists were fully aware that the actions of the Healing Church in their use of the Old Blood would lead to the spread of the Scourge.

While the Healing Church spread throughout Yharnam, Willem and the remaining Loyalists got to work on their own research. This is where things get fuzzy, as there is very little information available on this crucial point in time. What we can see however, are the results of the Loyalists' research. If the PC Hunter encounters Iosefka, or rather, the imposter Iosefka, after the Blood Moon has risen, killing her will make her drop a Cord of the Eye, which states: *Provost Willem sought the Cord in order to elevate his being and thoughts to those of a Great One, by lining his brain with eyes. The only choice, he knew, if man were to ever match Their greatness.*

When the PC Hunter first enters the Byrgenwerth Mansion, they encounter on the second floor an NPC Hunter named Yurie who appears to be a member of the Choir, the highest-ranking members of the Healing Church. Yurie wields A Call Beyond, the Choir's ultimate weapon, and wears the Blindfold Cap and the attire of a Choir member. This would show that the Choir returned to the ruins of Byrgenwerth from time to time in order to gather old research notes or artifacts. That the imposter Iosefka, who wields a weapon of the Choir, an Augur of Ebrietas, would be in possession of an artifact that once belonged to Master Willem can be explained as such. The Choir recovered this cord, the umbilical cord of the Orphan of Kos. Willem had used the Cord in order to further his research, delving deeper and deeper into the depths of human understanding. During this point in time, with intense research into the Great Ones being conducted at Byrgenwerth, the students were twisted and transformed into Gardens of Eyes for Willem's research, bizarre Kin of the Cosmos who would wander the grounds. Only four individuals were left intact: Willem, Dores the Graveguard, the unnamed Doorman who would be entrusted with the password, and Rom. Whatever happened to Caryll is unclear. She may have left with Laurence. She may have been transformed along with the student body, or she may have left Byrgenwerth at an unspecified time to continue her research separately. However, thanks to Caryll's transcriptions of the inhuman uttering of the Great Ones, the Loyalists learned of the importance and the power held by great bodies of water. If we take a look at any of the Lake or Sea runes, we can find the description: *"Great volumes of water serve as a bulwark guarding sleep, and an augur of the*

eldritch Truth. Overcome this hindrance, and seek what is yours." This even matches the game mechanics, in which runes representing Water provide defense and resistance.

"The grand lake of mud, hidden now, from sight." - Micolash

Master Willem's last, great ritual ascended Rom into that of a newly formed Great One. Placed at the bottom of the Moonside Lake, Rom's empty mind served as a shield for our physical plane, protected by the great body of water. It prevented the beckoning of the Moon Presence by Laurence's Healing Church. With his knowledge and understanding of the Great Ones, Willem was able to use the Orphan's Cord to rebirth a new Great One and line her brain with eyes, using her as a living bulwark to seal away the Great Ones, the Nightmare, and the Blood Moon. But where did she come from?

We have already determined what the word *vacuous* means: empty, mindless. This can very easily be attributed to a simpleton, or to a braindead being. Rom, however, certainly does not seem to be braindead. While she is weak, she most certainly attempts to defend herself in the meager ways she has. In the interview with Hidetaka Miyazaki found in the Official Guide, Mizayaki was asked what his favorite boss was. His answer was Rom. But that in itself, while interesting, was not very striking. However the specifics of his response were... unexpected. *"I really like her. There are some* ***oddly cute*** *aspects to her moves and modeling."* There is another type being that is blank, empty. As John Locke writes, human beings are born *Tabula Rasa*, a *blank slate*, empty beings that are given shape by our experiences. A being that can be described as being cute, weak, helpless, and empty of thoughts, lacking of experience: an infant. From Miyazaki's Interview: *"In the world of Bloodborne, babies that are treated as "special" in one way or the other are offered as lures to the Great Ones. The Great Ones have all lost their children because of their positions, and as a result, they're attracted to these 'special' babies. The babies are one way of calling them."*

The Hunter can find a note in Yahar'gul left by a dead Hunter, which reads: *"Nightmarish rituals crave a newborn. Find one, and*

silence its harrowing cry." The first instinct of the player is to associate this with the School of Mensis. They must be using some child to perform a ritual. But Micolash and his students are only following in the footsteps of Master Willem, trying to reproduce the success of the Loyalists of Byrgenwerth.

"As you once did for the vacuous Rom, grant us eyes, grant us eyes. Plant eyes on our brains, to cleanse our beastly idiocy."

Rom is **not** a Great One, in fact Bloodborne causes understandable confusion in that it refers to many different species, factions, and groups as belonging to the singular group *The Great Ones*. But the Kin, ascended mortals who bleed a clear Serum, are **not** fully fledged, complete and whole Great Ones like the Moon Presence, the Wet Nurse, or the Orphan. They are merely Kin of the Cosmos. Killing Rom does **not** drop a Great One Coldblood; killing Rom drops a **Kin** Coldblood. Rom, daughter of Willem, either literally or metaphorically, born from the fruits of his research and used to ascend. Look at the way she moves, desperately backing away from the Hunter, she seems almost infantile. Unlike the rest of the Kin that are encountered, Rom has no natural defense mechanisms other than her ability to manipulate energy. If you ask me, she doesn't look like a spider at all... she looks like a caterpillar. The infant form of a butterfly, one that may have become beautiful.

Chapter Two: The Healing Church, Lady Maria, Iosefka, and Ebrietas

"If it's blood you're interested in, you should try the Healing Church. The church controls all knowledge on blood ministration, and all varieties of blood. Across the valley to the East of Yharnam lies the town of the Healing Church, known as the Cathedral Ward. And deep within the Cathedral Ward is the old grand cathedral. ...the birthplace of the Healing Church's special blood, or so they say. Yharnamites don't share much with outsiders. Normally, they wouldn't let you near this place, but... The hunt is on tonight. This might be your chance..."

–Gilbert

It's the first concrete objective the PC Hunter can make for themselves: Get to the Healing Church and look for answers. The Healing Church is the institution that, while it doesn't technically rule over Yharnam, serves as the City's anchor and structure. It is from the Healing Church that the art of Blood Ministration, the art that Yharnam would become famous for, was first brought. With the use of the Healing Church's *special blood* they were able to cure any disease, forming a religion devoted to the worship of Gods and Blood. When tales of the curative properties of Yharnam Blood spread, those suffering from incurable diseases often traveled to Yharnam in order to seek out their last chance at salvation. The PC Hunter was one such individual, according to promotional information leading up to the release of Bloodborne. In search of Blood that can cure any disease, the PC travels to Yharnam. But what is the Healing Church? Where does it come from? And, most importantly, what is the secret behind their *special blood*?

For starters, I will use only information and evidence that can be found inside of the game. I will save my personal interpretations and beliefs for the end, so that you can make up your own mind about the evidence presented.

The first sane member of the Healing Church the PC Hunter encounters is Alfred the Executioner. From Alfred, the Hunter learns more about the roots of the Healing Church: *"The Healing Church is the foundation of blood healing. Well, I'm a simple hunter, quite unfamiliar with the ins and outs of the institution. But I have heard that the holy medium of blood healing is venerated in the main cathedral. And that councillors of the old church reside in the high stratum of the Cathedral Ward. [. . .] The tomb of the gods, carved out below Yharnam, should be familiar to every hunter. Well, once a group of young Byrgenwerth scholars discovered a holy medium deep within the tomb. This led to the founding of the Healing Church, and the establishment of blood healing."*

The short story is that a group of scholars in Byrgenwerth discovered blood of incredible power in the tombs underneath, specifically, they discovered Old Blood. The Old Blood and knowledge of the Great Ones that existed led to a revolution in the college's theories and experiments. But Master Willem, head of Byrgenwerth College, disagreed with the idea of using the Old Blood of the Great Ones to advance humanity.

Fear the Old Blood - Master Willem, to Laurence

This led to the Byrgenwerth Schism, in which a group of scholars led by Laurence left Byrgenwerth and founded the Healing Church. There are four individuals whom we know were founders of the Church, though there may very well have been unnamed others: Laurence, Gehrman, Micolash, and Maria. Laurence became the First Vicar, founding a new religion and promising a cure to any disease through the use of his miraculous Blood Ministration. A note found in the Grand Cathedral reads: *"Heir to the ritual of blood, purveyor of ministration. Place your hand on the altar's sacred covering, and inscribe Master Laurence's adage upon your flesh."* Laurence and his Blood Ministration brought a new era into Yharnam, a culture of Blood Worship spreading through the population.

But with the tainted blood of the Great Ones flowing through human veins, the Scourge of the Beast came to Yharnam. Those

who had been ministered by the Old Blood were susceptible to coming under the effects of the Scourge. In response to this, Gehrman, one of the men who had sided with Laurence in the Byrgenwerth Schism, founded the Workshop. Located in a hidden area of the Upper Cathedral Ward, the Workshop was a place of training of elite warriors, dispatched by the Church to hunt the beasts and prevent panic from spreading through the population. The Hunter Attire reads: *"One of the standard articles of hunter attire fashioned at the workshop. A fine piece of hunter attire that provides stable defense to anyone facing Yharnam's beastly threat. Allows one to stalk beasts unannounced, by cover of night."*

The last sentence is the most important: *"Allows one to stalk beasts unannounced, by cover of night."* Originally, the Workshop was likely a secret institution. The Hunters wore no symbols and had no uniform, save for the Saw Hunter Badge which each kept in order to identify one another: *"Badge crafted long ago at the Workshop. Attests to one's prowess as a hunter of beasts. The Workshop is gone, and no group recognizes this meaningless badge."* They operated in the cover of darkness, disposing of Yharnamites who had succumbed to the Scourge of the Beast, likely as more of a cover-up than anything; anything to prevent the public becoming aware that the blood they were being administered was turning them into monsters.

But what of Maria? According to Maria's Hunting Attire: *"Among the first hunters, all students of Gehrman, was the lady hunter Maria. Maria is distantly related to the undead queen, but had great admiration for Gehrman, unaware of his curious mania."* Born in Cainhurst, Maria was a beautiful woman, no doubt even by Cainhurst standards. While she was a relative of the Queen, to the aristocratic Nobles of Cainhurst this likely meant very little. No doubt every Noble was dying to tell everyone they knew about how they were Annalise's twelfth cousin seventh removed, and so the relation probably didn't mean much. Unlike the rest of her people, however, Maria disliked the use of blood-weaponry, as stated by the Rakuyo: *"This sword feeds not off blood, but instead demands great dexterity. Lady Maria was fond of this aspect of the Rakuyo, as she frowned upon blood blades, despite being a distant relative of the queen."* However after the events that took

place at the Fishing Hamlet, Maria could no longer bare to wield a weapon. As she and Gehrman retrieved the Orphan for Byrgenwerth, Maria threw Rakuyo into the Hamlet's well: "*One day, she abandoned her beloved Rakuyo, casting it into a dark well, when she could stomach it no longer.*"

We as players first hear of Lady Maria from the patients in the Nightmare Research Hall. They call out to her and speak of her with genuine admiration and even love. They ask her to hold their hand or to help them, to care for them.

"Key to the balcony on the first floor of the Research Hall. Lady Maria of the Astral Clocktower gave this to the patient, Adeline. Maria had hoped Adeline would find comfort in the faint breeze that carried the scent of flowers from the outside, but Adeline couldn't fathom her intentions." -Balcony Key

It seems that Maria genuinely cared for the patients of the Church's experiments, as she went out of her way to try and make Adeline more comfortable in her suffering. While the experiments themselves were gruesome, there's no evidence that there was any malicious intent towards the patients themselves. Though it might be their madness, the patients all seem to be there willingly, even apologizing for having been failures in the experimentation.

But eventually, Maria died. Her passing marks the end of an era, the beginning of the transition from the old Church and the old Hunters into the new ones, the ones that we find ourselves engaging in the present. But how did Maria die? When we meet her, she is noticeably dead, at least as dead as a consciousness can be. The evidence seems to point towards a slit throat, as the blood on her blouse has traveled down from her neck. In addition, during her boss fight she visibly stabs herself in the throat in order to initiate the second phase of the battle. This seems to point towards Maria's death as an act of suicide, slitting her own throat.

But let us pause for a moment to remember the individual other than Gehrman and Maria who left with Laurence: Micolash. There is very little information on Micolash and on the School of Mensis, which was no doubt founded to continue the work at Byrgenwerth. Micolash founded his institution in a city hidden by the Church, Yahar'gul. From here, Micolash could research in secret while supposedly reporting to Laurence. The Upper Cathedral Ward Key states: *"The upper echelons of the Healing Church are formed by the School of Mensis, based in the Unseen Village, and the Choir occupying the Upper Cathedral Ward."* The School of Mensis was likely there first, as its research more closely resembles Byrgenwerth, and its practice of researching in secrecy matches the Healing Church's early strategy of working, for the most part, behind the scenes.

Everything changed with Old Yharnam. Ashen Blood was a horrible epidemic that spread like wildfire. Naturally, in order to cure the disease, Blood Ministration was used in excess, on each and every one of the victims. This would lead to the Scourge, as referenced by the antidote tablets: *"Small medicinal tablets that counteract poison. Used to treat ashen blood, the baffling sickness that ravaged Old Yharnam long ago. These tablets only provide short-term relief. The ashen blood ailment eventually triggered the spread of the beastly scourge."*

After Old Yharnam, the Scourge could no longer be kept a secret. The Workshop was disbanded and replaced with a new group that would become the Healing Church Hunters, led by the Hunter Ludwig. The Workshop was no longer necessary, and was sealed away. It is likely at this time that the Healing Church took more control over Yharnam, the Church effectively acting as the governing body of the City. With the Church firmly seated in power as the saviors who had brought Blood Ministration to Yharnam, the Choir was formed in the upper reaches of the city.

By now, the Healing Church was being run not by Laurence and Gehrman, but by the generation who came after them. The Choir ruled over the Church while Ludwig's Hunters formed the new ranks of Church's police force. The School of Mensis remained, but likely grew further and further apart from the Church over

time. Likely dissatisfied with the progress of research that had been made since the Church split from Byrgenwerth, the Choir began to research the blood of the Great Ones.

The Choir Garb states: *"Members of the Choir are both the highest-ranking clerics of the Healing Church, and scholars who continue the work that began at Byrgenwerth."* It is uncertain exactly how much of the Church's religion was merely used as a figurehead. It's not clear if the Choir truly believed that the Great Ones were Gods, or if they simply used that as a way to legitimize their research. They certainly acknowledged that the Great Ones, if not Gods, were certainly God-like. The level of detail devoted to the sacred symbols and carvings in the Church can only display a veneration of the Great Ones as superior beings, specifically the Formless Great One, Oedon. To get a closer look at the Choir's motivations and research, let's take a moment to analyze Doctor Iosefka, a character whom the PC Hunter encounters very early on in the story.

Bloodborne begins with the PC Hunter awakening in the first floor of Doctor Iosefka's clinic after receiving their very first blood ministration. Iosefka is the very first NPC that the Hunter can encounter in Bloodborne; after the Hunter dies to the Wolfbeast and is sent to the Hunter's Dream, returning with weaponry marking them a Hunter, if the Player travels back up the stairs towards the clinic they will encounter the door locked and barred. Through a crack in the door we see a woman dressed in white, with whom we can speak. *"Are you... out on the hunt? Then I'm very sorry, but... I cannot open this door. I am Iosefka. The patients here in my clinic must not be exposed to infection. I know that you hunt for us, for our town, but I'm sorry. Please. This is all that I can do."* Iosefka will assist the Hunter by providing them with her specially concentrated Blood, capable of fully healing the Hunter. *"The product of a slow and careful refinement process, this rare blood vial appears to be a clinic original."* The Hunter can return to Iosefka at any time to collect more Blood, but can only carry a single vial at the time. This changes, however, after the death of Father Gascoigne.

This time, when the Hunter comes to Iosefka, there will be no blood provided. Instead, the Doctor will ask the Hunter to direct any individuals they come across to her clinic, so that they can be treated and cured. From this point onwards, the Doctor speaks with a slightly deeper tone of voice, and in fact is voiced completely by a different person. While Iosefka's voice actress is credited as being Jenny Funnel, there is a second credit to an *Imposter Doctor*, credited to an actress named Lucy Briggs-Owen. From this point onwards, Iosefka will ask the Hunter to bring her more and more people, assuring that they are being taken proper care of. As a reward for the Hunter if the Hunter begins to bring her people, she will eventually start providing the player with Blue Elixirs. Blue Elixir is described as a:*"Dubious liquid medicine used in strange experiments conducted by high ministers of the Healing Church."* A rather chilling item indeed for a common blood ministration doctor to be carrying.

But it isn't unless the Hunter finds the back entrance to the Clinic, accessible by climbing up an adjacent building connected to the Forbidden Woods, that the truth of Iosefka's research can be discovered. Here, the results of the research is discovered. Any NPCs that the Hunter sent in the past to Iosefka's clinic will be found, transformed and twisted into Celestials, blue-skinned Kin of the Cosmos. If the Hunter sent nobody to the Clinic, they will only find a single Celestial, located in the Sickroom. Upon its death, it drops one of Iosefka's Blood Vials, possibly one that was being saved for the Hunter upon the player's return. These are presumably the remains of the true Iosefka whom the player meets at the beginning of the game. As the Hunter travels upstairs towards the top of the clinic, one of two events will take place.

If the Hunter goes to the top of the the clinic **before** the Blood Moon has risen, the Imposter Iosefka will attack the Hunter. She wields a Threaded Cane and a Repeating Pistol, and if her health is low enough will even attack the Hunter with A Call Beyond, the ultimate weapon of the Healing Church: *"One of the secret rites of the Choir. Long ago, the Healing Church used phantasms to reach a lofty plane of darkness, but failed to make contact with the outer reaches of the cosmos. The rite failed to achieve its intended purpose, but instead created a small exploding star, now*

a powerful part of the Choir's arsenal. At times, failure is the mother of invention." The False Iosefka is one of four NPCs who wield A Call Beyond, the other three being Micolash, the Forgotten Madman, and Yurie, the Choir Member found in the Byrgenwerth Mansion. We can infer from this revelation that the False Iosefka is a member of the Choir, relocating from the Upper Cathedral Ward to Iosefka's Clinic in order to continue her research, possibly because of the fact that due to the spread of the Scourge of Beasts the Cathedral Ward is no longer a safe place to operate. Upon killing the False Iosefka, she will drop a powerful Oedon Writhe rune. Interestingly enough, the Hunter can locate a weaker version of the Oedon Writhe rune by killing Adella the Nun, or by looting it off of the Celestial she becomes if the Hunter sent her to Iosefka's Clinic. This connection only reinforces the False Iosefka's affiliation with the Church, and that she held a rank of higher importance than a nun. But this is only one of two possible events that can occur in Iosefka's clinic.

If the Hunter goes to the top of the clinic **after** the Blood Moon has risen, they will find her on all fours, perched on one of the operating tables. *"God I'm nauseous... Have you ever felt this? It's progressing. I can see things... I knew it, I'm different. I'm no beast... I... Oh... God, it feels awful... but, it proves that I'm chosen. Don't you see? How they writhe, writhe inside my head... It's... rather... rapturous..."* With enough time to conclude her research, Iosefka has begun her ascension. Killing her can drop what I believe is the Orphan's umbilical cord, which was recovered by the Choir.

But what was this research? What did the Choir do? How did they do it? This brings us the final topic of our current analysis: Ebrietas, Daughter of the Cosmos. Ebrietas is found in the depths of the Orphanage, described as: *"Key to the Orphanage, birthplace of the Choir. The Orphanage, shadowed by the Grand Cathedral, was a place of scholarship and experimentation, where young orphans became potent unseen thinkers for the Healing Church. The Choir, that would later split the Healing Church, was a creation of the Orphanage."* We have established previously that it was originally the School of Mensis which performed research for the Church in the secrecy of Yahar'gul, however with the growth of the Church's power after the cleansing of Old Yharnam there

was no longer a need for secrecy and a new effort was put forward into spreading the Old Blood. It would be the Choir who would fulfill this need, with the Orphanage as their laboratory.

Note that the Orphanage is located directly behind the Grand Cathedral. We can recall Gilbert mentioning that: *"Deep within the Cathedral Ward is the old grand cathedral. ...the birthplace of the Healing Church's special blood."* But the Cathedral is not the source of the blood. While it is provided to the public **from** the Grand Cathedral, it actually originates in the Orphanage. From Ebrietas, and the Celestials. Ebrietas is the left-behind Great One, whatever that means, and communed and worked with the Healing Church in their research. We find multiple references to this.

"One of the secret rites of the Choir, high-ranking members of the Healing Church. Use phantasms, the invertebrates known to be augurs of the Great Ones, to partially summon abandoned Ebrietas. One of the few rites that allow one to directly utilize the power of the Great Ones, and evidence that the Choir had approached the eldritch Truth." - Augur of Ebrietas

"Great chalices unlock deeper reaches of the labyrinth. The Great Isz Chalice became the cornerstone of the Choir, the elite delegation of the Healing Church. It was also the first Great Chalice brought back to the surface since the time of Byrgenwerth, and allowed the Choir to have audience with Ebrietas." - Great Isz Chalice

But who is Ebrietas, what is her purpose? What research did she allow the Healing Church to perform, and what relation does she have to the Great Ones and the Old Blood?

What follows is purely my own interpretation and belief based on the evidence I have gathered. Do not consider any of this as solid fact. Instead, use it as my interpretation, so that you can gather your own beliefs.

The Healing Church operated in secrecy in its formative days. Micolash slowly continued his own research into the Old Blood through kidnappings and experimentation. Laurence administered the Old Blood to the ill, and those who succumbed to the Scourge of the Beast were eliminated under cover of darkness by Gehrman's Hunters. While this was going on, the Church quietly continued their research into the Great Ones, independent from Byrgenwerth. Initially, the only Great One that the Healing Church had identified had been Kos, the Great One from the depths of the ocean. The Church's experiments into the Great Ones therefore revolved around water, as described by the Brain Fluid: *In the early days of the Healing Church, the Great Ones were linked to the ocean, and so the cerebral patients would imbibe water, and listen for the howl of the sea. Brain fluid writhed inside the head, the initial makings of internal eyes.* It was a fruitless pursuit, however, for as far as we know the Great Ones do not originate from the sea, but from the Dreamlands and the Cosmos. As such, the experiments were failures. Overseeing the research from the Astral Clocktower was Lady Maria.

After the Hamlet Massacre, Maria refused to hunt again. Instead, she began to run research towards the Great Ones for the budding Healing Church. But her thoughts could never leave the blasphemous nature of what she and Gehrman had done at the Hamlet, how the Orphan had been ripped from its mother's womb. Nor would she be allowed to forget.

"Atonement for the wretches... By the wrath of Mother Kos."

Not all of the Hamlet had been destroyed. The parasites that inhabited their Mother Kos had managed to infest the villagers, transforming them into ascended Kin of the Cosmos. Gehrman was the First Hunter, and Maria his greatest pupil. In this sense, they can be seen as the Father and Mother of all Hunters. Anyone who calls themselves a Hunter, no matter what organization they associate themselves with, is a descendent in some way from Gehrman and Maria, who murdered the Orphan of Kos.

"Curse the fiends, their children too, and their children, forever true."

Perhaps Maria was haunted by unending nightmares of what she had done. Perhaps, in her frustration, she desperately continued her experiments. Surely something had to come out of the atrocities she had committed? But each and every one of her experiments was another failure, another dead end. The patients began to notice her frustration with them, sobbingly apologizing for their failures, begging for her forgiveness. Maybe over time she became less and less compassionate with the patients, and more and more wracked with guilt. On one hand, her desire to uncover the truth behind Kos and the Great Ones could not be stopped, but on the other hand she cared for the patients of the Research Hall and did not want to see them suffer. She could see only one way out.

"Oh, I know very well. How the secrets beckon so sweetly. Only a honest death will cure you now. Liberate you, from your wild curiosity." -Lady Maria of the Astral Clocktower.

And so she ended her own life. Her death marked the end of an era. By this point, Micolash and the school of Mensis had already begun to draw further and further away from the rest of the Healing Church. With her death, Gehrman spiraled into depression and the elite Workshop was sealed away and abandoned. The old, secretive, quiet Healing Church had begun to die, and may have fallen apart completely were it not for the events of Old Yharnam. The Church had always relied on gaining new followers through the use of their miraculous disease-curing blood, and Old Yharnam gave them the perfect opportunity to display their religion to the masses. After Old Yharnam's cleansing the Healing Church exploded in power and fame. They could no longer operate in secrecy, and needed a much more significant source of the Blood.

"The Great Isz Chalice became the cornerstone of the Choir, the elite delegation of the Healing Church. It was also the first Great Chalice brought back to the surface since the time of

Byrgenwerth, and allowed the Choir to have audience with Ebrietas."

And so the Choir was born. An elite delegation of old scholars and clerics, the Choir would become the new ipso-facto leaders of the Healing Church. The Choir plunged into the tomb, deeper than anyone had gone since the days of Byrgenwerth, looking for a greater source of Blood and a way in which to bring their research to the next level. They traveled to the ruins of the Pthumerian City of Isz, which had not been entered since the time of the Byrgenwerth Scholars. They went to meet with Ebrietas, Daughter of the Cosmos.

The Great Isz Chalice was relocated to the Orphanage located behind the Grand Cathedral and would serve as the main laboratory for the Choir. Interestingly, we see many, many carriages throughout our time in Yharnam. Many players will recall seeing or leaving notes in front of them with charming or amusing words such as *despicable infant*. But... **where are all the babies?** We encounter no child-sized coffins in the streets of Yharnam, but many, many, many carriages. Where we **do** find child-sized coffins is in the Upper Cathedral Ward.

In the Orphanage, the Choir communed with Ebrietas and used their new knowledge to experiment on the babies that were either abandoned or sent to the Orphanage. It is even possible that, after the widespread epidemic of the Scourge, the Choir went through the public and gathered all babies and children of Yharnam under the pretense of protecting them until the Hunt was over. Yharnamites would have no reason not to trust the Church, and were likely delighted that their governing body had such a concern for the welfare of their children.

In the Lumenflower Gardens, we can see the results of their experiments. Look at the way the Celestials seems to grow from the ground. Even the name *garden* seems to suggest an almost sickening way in which the Celestials were harvested from the ground like a crop. This was the source of Yharnam's *special blood*. The children who were elevated to becoming Celestials were then harvested and used as sources of Blood for the Church,

a renewable resource that would allow them to provide the entire City with as much Blood as it needed.

The False Iosefka was one such researcher, who fled to the Clinic after the Upper Cathedral Ward was lost to the Scourge. The presence of Scourge Beasts in the Upper Cathedral Ward only proves that the Scourge was too much for even the Choir to handle, and that the researchers likely fled. One researcher fled to Byrgenwerth, the first member of the Choir that the PC Hunter encounters. The Choir Member, Yurie, is seen wandering the second floor of Byrgenwerth Mansion. She even wears a Blindfold Cap, reminding us that: *"Members of the Choir are both the highest-ranking clerics of the Healing Church, and scholars who continue the work that began at Byrgenwerth. The eye covering indicates their debt to the teachings of Master Willem, even though their paths diverged."*

The Choir had an enormous respect for Master Willem, even though they split away from him. There was never any violence between the two factions in Byrgenwerth, only a difference in philosophy that led to an inevitable separation. It is no wonder that the Choir never disposed of Master Willem, they truly saw him as a highly respected figure in their history. In fact, Master Willem had achieved what the Choir so desperately yearned for: He had ascended to the level of the Gods.

In the beginning days of Bloodborne's release, all anyone could talk about in regards to Lore was Iosefka. Who is she? Is she an imposter? When do they switch? Which is the real one? So much focus was placed on the False Iosefka that the real one got swept away. People were so engrossed with the revelation that Iosefka was replaced with an imposter that they stopped looking at the original. Who was Iosefka? Like the imposter, she wears the White Church Garb, which tells us: "*These doctors are superiors to the black preventative hunters, and specialists in experimentally-backed blood ministration and the scourge of the beast. They believe that medicine is not a means of treatment but rather a method for research. and that some knowledge can only be obtained by exposing oneself to sickness.*" This implies that Iosefka was a high-ranking member of the Church, and a

specialist on experimental blood. Now look at the back of Iosefka's clinic. Bodies have been dumped into pits, vials upon vials upon vials of blood have been collected, hundreds of research notes have been written. There are also Celestials in the Forbidden Woods, who appear to have wandered off from the Clinic. How could this be the work of the False Iosefka, when **the original Iosefka doesn't get replaced until the death of Father Gascoigne.** Furthermore, how was she replaced in the first place? There is absolutely no evidence whatsoever that it is possible to copy someone's face. There's only one type of woman that has the same face as another: a sister. In the back of Iosefka's clinic we find a half-transformed Celestial, dead on an operating table. Iosefka isn't some innocent doctor, she's the one who invented the process in the first place. This explains why one of Iosefka's Blood Vials can be found in the Nightmare of Mensis, as the School of Mensis and the Choir shared their research. It's possible that Iosefka's Blood Vial is, itself, the key to the Celestial transformation; a clinic original. Who knows what might have happened had we consumed enough of it.

When the False Iosefka fled to the Clinic, she brought with her an artifact that the Choir had previously recovered from Byrgenwerth, the Orphan's Cord of the Eye. The False Iosefka sought to ascend just as Master Willem had, by lining her brain with eyes in the manner he had done so many years ago. *"How they writhe, writhe inside my head... It's... rather... rapturous..."* She isn't pregnant at all, but instead has run out of time to continue her experimentation. In her last ditch effort, she imbibes Willem's Cord. But it doesn't work, as evidenced by the fact that she bleeds a dark red.

"Seek Paleblood to transcend the hunt". The first note that the Player receives. Many, many players have noticed that there are certain enemies which bleed not red, but a clear and almost pale colored blood. However, this is **not** the specific Paleblood. If this indeed was the blood of the Great Ones, there would be a few figures whom we would believe to bleed pale, but in fact bleed a dark red themselves: Amygdala, the Orphan, the Wet Nurse, and the Moon Presence. There **are** however, certain figures which bleed what I call, Serum: Celestials, Brainsuckers, Master Willem, Rom, and **Ebrietas.** Rom, an ascended mortal, does bleed red if

the Hunter attacks her stomach, as do her Spider Kin. But if the Hunter attacks the eyes and heads of Rom or her progeny they bleed the Serum of the Kin. Serum is not blood of the Great Ones, but rather blood of the Kin of the Cosmos, those who were once mortal but ascended to becoming Kin of the Great Ones. Notice how Ebrietas is mentioned as being the **Daughter** of the Cosmos. But this doesn't follow, as every Great One loses its child. Instead, the Great Ones yearn for surrogates.

Ebrietas was possibly Pthumerian, as she is found by the The Scholars in a Pthumerian city. It is well documented that the Pthumerians' research and experimentation with the Old Blood led to their ascension as they neared the Eldritch Truth, however they were struck down before they could truly to ascend to being Great Ones. The Scourge of Beasts spread throughout the people, the Blood Moon rose. The Great Ones descended, and a womb was left with child. Yharnam's pregnancy with Mergo was a failure and so in search of a surrogate, Ebrietas, possibly a researcher of Pthumeru, ascended to the level of the Great Ones. It is so very interesting to me how Ebrietas is repeatedly referred to as having been *left behind.* Ebrietas is not a true Great One, instead she was ascended to becoming Kin just as Willem did. The Pthumerians are ancient, who knows how long it took for her to develop into her current form? Perhaps in a thousand years, Master Willem will look much like her as well.

She was abandoned, as the Great Ones left after the devastation of Pthumeru. And so she waited in the Labyrinth, caring for the Phantasms, small slug-like creatures which were named as being familiars of the Great Ones. And when The Scholars stumbled upon her in Isz, she would finally have an outlet with which to commune with the outside world.

Willem and The Scholars met with Ebrietas, and through her they began their research of the Old Blood, the tainted blood of Ebrietas, surrogate child of the Cosmos. It was through Ebrietas' tainted blood that the tragedy which struck Pthumeru would be doomed to repeat itself in the city of Yharnam.

Ebrietas seems to get her name from the Ebrietas Butterfly, a species of butterfly found in South America, which matches the, although admittedly distorted form, of Ebrietas as having an almost Butterfly-like appearance. When we meet her, she is found in front of a corpse, a corpse of a Vacuous Spider. Remember that even though something may die in the Waking World, its consciousness can continue to survive in the Dreamlands. Ebrietas had lost her daughter, Rom. It's a tragedy really: Every Great One loses its child.

But there were many surrogates to be found in the baby carriages of Yharnam.

Chapter Three: Djura, The Powder Kegs, Ashen Blood, and Old Yharnam

"Old Yharnam, burned and abandoned by men, is now home only to beasts. They are of no harm to those above. Turn back...or the hunter will face the hunt."

-Djura, Retired Hunter

The PC Hunter encounters Djura for the first time upon entering Old Yharnam, in which Djura warns the hunter to leave. When the PC Hunter fails to comply, he is none too pleased and becomes aggressive in his defense of Old Yharnam. But to really discover who Djura is, let's first take a look at the history of the heretics of the workshop, the Powder Kegs.

For starters, I will use only information and evidence that can be found inside of the game. I will save my personal interpretations and beliefs for the end, so that you can make up your own mind about the evidence presented.

The Powder Kegs were, and I use the term **were** intentionally, a group of hunters with a flair for the dramatic and a love of complexity, intricacy, and explosiveness in their designs. They deviated from the Hunting style of simplicity in design developed by Gehrman the First Hunter, and preferred ambitious (or excessive depending on your point of view) weapon design.

Influenced by a love of flame and a desire to crush and burn, they developed their main weapon of choice, the Boom Hammer, which is described as:

"A trick weapon used by the old hunters, and crafted by the workshop heretics, the Powder Kegs. A giant hammer equipped with a miniature furnace. When ignited and fired, it emits a volley of flame that explodes furiously upon impact. Crush the beasts,

then burn them - the brute simplicity of the Boom Hammer was favored by hunters with an acute distaste for beasts."

Another slightly rarer Powder Keg weapon developed was the Stake Driver, Djura's personal weapon of choice. The Stake Driver is described as:

A trick weapon fashioned by the workshop heretics, the Powder Kegs. The stake driver allows for high-damage critical attacks, but is difficult to use and leaves its wielder wide open, but none of this should bother a mere Powder Keg.

These two new trick weapons, among others like the Rifle Spear and Whirligig Saw, were drastically different from the previous designs of the Hunter's Workshop. However the Powder Kegs didn't settle with trick weapons, even trying to implement bigger and stronger firepower into their arsenal with the Cannon and Gattling Gun.

We can also give the Powder Kegs credit for the design of the Rope Molotov Cocktails, seeing as gaining the Powder Keg Badge unlocks them at the Bath Messenger.

At some point in time, the Powder Kegs were labeled heretics and exiled from the workshop. Presumably, the Powder Kegs are no more, as all references to them are in the past tense, and even their badge description refers to them as the *late* Powder Kegs. They were very likely disbanded or slain quite a long time ago, seeing as nobody seems to reference them. Their association with the Workshop only lends credence to the idea of the Powder Kegs being a relatively old faction, as the Workshop itself is no longer a relevant institution as evidenced by the Saw Hunter Badge: *The Workshop is gone, and no group recognizes this meaningless badge, except the messengers in the bath who understand its profundity.* The only remaining trace of Powder Kegs is found in the Retired Hunter Djura.

So who is Djura? His official description reads: *"An old veteran hunter who is said to possess amazing skill. No one has seen him in many years, and he looks like he's been on his own for some*

time." We learn more from the description of the Grey Wolf Cap which states it as:

"Attire of the retired hunter Djura. This worn wolf cap was his trademark. Djura is known through his contact with the Powder Kegs, the heretics of the workshop. He is said to have been both uncommonly kind and dreadfully foolish. Djura felt defeated by the state of Old Yharnam and renounced his hunter's vows."

Uncommonly kind is certainly right. Djura is unique amongst any character in Bloodborne as showing sympathy towards those affected by the Scourge of the Beast. *"The things you hunt, they're not beasts. They're people."* It's also interesting to note that his cap refers to him as having **contact** with the Powder Kegs, rather than being a **member**. It's possible that Djura knew of the Powder Kegs or made friends with them, that he carries a Powder Keg Badge indicates that at the very least he was some kind of Honorary Member. He most assuredly traveled alongside the Powder Kegs, as the description of the Gatling Gun states that Djura had three companions, the youngest of whom used the Gatling Gun.

But Djura's absolute most important quality is that he, like the PC Hunter, was once a part of the Hunter's Dream.

"I no longer dream, but I was once a hunter, too."

"You have the whole night to dream. Make the best of it."

He also knows full well that killing the PC Hunter will do nothing but stall them. If the PC dies to Djura, he remarks: *"I should think you still have dreams? Well, next time you dream, give some thought to the hunt, and its purpose."*

I do not believe every Hunter is special like the PC and Djura. There would be much more information and general knowledge about the Hunter's Dream if this were the case. Certain Hunters are special, chosen by Gehrman and attached to the Hunter's Dream. The title I have given these special Hunters is a Paleblood Hunter. The Doll herself admits that the PC was not the first:

"Over time, countless hunters have visited this dream. The graves here stand in their memory. It all seems so long ago now..."

Djura was at one point a Paleblood Hunter, like the PC Hunter, who retired from Hunting and renounced his vows to live in solitude.

Which brings us to Old Yharnam. While Old Yharnam is an optional location in the game, the PC Hunter is guided towards it by Gehrman in order to acquire the Holy Chalice. Historically, Old Yharnam was the location of a terrible disease known as Ashen Blood. Antidote tablets are described as: *"Small medicinal tablets that counteract poison. Used to treat ashen blood, the baffling sickness that ravaged Old Yharnam long ago. These tablets only provide short-term relief."* The tablets were used as to give temporary relief to the victims of the disease, while they were being treated by the then newly formed Healing Church. What would bring true relief would be the bringing of Blood Ministration, the medical procedure that would become the cornerstone of Yharnam. With the ability to cure any disease, the Healing Church's blood ministration got to work immediately. However, as the antidote notes:

"The ashen blood ailment eventually triggered the spread of the beastly scourge."

With blood ministration came the Scourge of the Beast, as the Old Blood used in the ministration would spread the Scourge. One disease had been contained, but the treatment gave birth to the Scourge, just as it had in Ailing Loran:

"There are trace remains of medical procedures in parts of ailing Loran. Whether these were attempts to control the scourge of the beast, or the cause of the outbreak, is unknown."

With the Scourge of the Beast too much to handle, a Hunt was called.

Now we have Djura, the Powder Kegs, and Old Yharnam, three pieces of a puzzle. But it's not unless the PC stumbles into a hidden building in Old Yharnam that the pieces connect. Near

Djura's tower is a hidden building that can be accessed by dropping a far, far distance down a ledge. Inside this building, everything comes together. Here, the PC Hunter finds two corpses. One of them holds a Rifle Spear, the other wears a set of Charred Hunter gear. Next to them is a Hunter's Note. This is where it all comes together.

"The red moon hangs low, and beasts rule the streets. Are we left no other choice, than to burn it all to cinders?"

What follows is purely my own interpretation and belief based on the evidence I have gathered. Do not consider any of this as solid fact. Instead, use it as my interpretation, so that you can gather your own beliefs.

After Maria's death and Gehrman's self-inflicted retirement, the Healing Church lost a significant portion of its strength. The School of Mensis began to drift apart from the Healing Church proper, and it seemed as if things were spiraling downwards. As the Healing Church continued its operations and explorations of the Pthumerian Labyrinth, they discovered a swamp in the Forbidden Woods. Located directly behind one of their clinics, the swamp was deathly poisonous and filled with strange, parasitic leeches. The poison likely came up from the Hintertombs in the Labyrinth, where we can see very similar swamps. We also find in this swamp what appear to be lumbering giants, much like the ones that the Healing Church would later employ as their enforcers. It's possible that the poison itself mutated those who lived into these beings. Either way, the Healing Church discovered these parasites that secreted a poisonous substance.

In the Forbidden Woods we also find the White Church Garb, which reminds us that the Church believes that "*medicine is not a means of treatment but rather a method for research, and some knowledge can only be obtained by exposing oneself to sickness.*" And so did the Church develop the Ashen Blood from the parasitic leeches, and loose it upon Old Yharnam.
As Old Yharnam began to grow sick with Ashen Blood, Laurence and the Church arrived with the Old Blood, promising a cure to all diseases. They were hailed as saviors as they began to administer

their miraculous special blood to the people of Yharnam, swelling in power and position. But, as the antidote reminds us, with Ashen Blood came the Scourge, as those who had been treated with Communion fell victim to the Scourge, becoming beasts.

With Gehrman gone and his Old Hunters disbanded, the Church had a need for a new workshop to deal with the victims of the Ashen Blood. The Oto Workshop was formed, and Hunters were recruited en masse to deal with the rising issue of the Scourge of the Beasts. These Hunters, unlike the silent warriors of Gehrman's, slaughtered the beasts furiously. The old hunter garb, worn by the Oto Hunters, tells us that in this era Hunters were "ten a penny", indicating that during the time of the Ashen Blood Plague, it was likely not at all unusual for citizens to witness groups of Hunters walking the streets in search of those who may have fallen to the Scourge. It was likely a time of great fear for the people of Yharnam, not knowing who would be next to turn, who would die of the plague, or who would be swept up in the bloodshed. The streets became a constant war zone between Hunter and Beast as the plague spiraled out of control and countless citizens succumbed to the Scourge of the Beast. Soon, the Oto Workshop developed into something else. As the Beasts grew more and more numerous, and more and more dangerous, the Powder Kegs were born in response. With them, came a young man named Djura.

Djura was, like the PC, a Paleblood Hunter guided by Gehrman. When the Old Yharnam Hunt began, Djura awoke in the Hunter's Dream. Djura acted as the PC of his time. He started weak, but gathered Blood Echoes and gained strength through the Doll. He lit lamps; he left notes; he slew bosses and probably died many times, reawakening at the lamp and trying again. During this time, he came into contact with the Powder Kegs.

Djura joined the Powder Kegs in hunting the beasts of Old Yharnam. He grew to use their equipment and they considered him an honorary member, and likely a friend. But as Old Yharnam grew more and more tainted with, the Scourge spread. When the line between man and beast was blurred, the red moon hung low. Djura, looking down at his fallen comrades, opened his notebook and left a note.

"The red moon hangs low, and beasts rule the streets. Are we left no other choice, than to burn it all to cinders?"

The Scourge of the Beast was too great, and the Powder Kegs could no longer stem the tide through simply hunting beasts. The Powder Kegs, with their flair for the dramatic, their bombastic nature, and their love of flame and explosions, were not gentle with Old Yharnam. **The city was cleansed.** The Powder Kegs razed the city to the ground. With the Blood Moon high over the sky and the beasts overpowering, the Hunters saw no choice but to burn it all down. The attire of the Charred Hunter Gear, worn by the Powder Kegs who cleansed the city, states: "*Wearers of this attire hunted down victims of the scourge who survived the raging flames and stench of singed blood."* Men, women, and children were hunted and purged. The entire city was cleansed to keep the Scourge of the Beast from spreading. Djura participated in all of it. It's possible that Djura tried to put a stop to it, or it's possible that he willingly, gleefully participated in the slaughter. Either way, Old Yharnam was devastated, never to recover.

With the Dawn approaching, Djura returned to the Hunter's Dream where Gehrman, the First Hunter, met him by the tree. Wracked by guilt and shame at the carnage he had caused, he sunk to his knees and accepted his death, severing his connection to the Hunter's Dream. When he awoke, the sun had risen and the Hunt was over. By now, the Workshop had branded and condemned the Powder Kegs as heretics. Those Powder Kegs who hadn't died in combat had become so drunk on blood that they had been dragged into the Hunter's Nightmare. All that remained was Djura. And so he went to Old Yharnam, where he had caused so much horror, and cast aside his Hunter's vows. If nobody cared about the beasts of Old Yharnam, then he would protect them from any further bloodshed.

Chapter Four: Ludwig, The Hunts, Father Gascoigne, and Eileen

"Ohhhh.. What's that smell? The sweet blood... Oh, it sings to me. It's enough to make a man sick."

-Father Gascoigne

When we as players are first thrust into Bloodborne we do not deal with eldritch monstrosities, horrible truths, or inconceivable entities beyond the reach of space and time. None of these facets of Bloodborne were ever included in promotional material. The terrible truth of Bloodborne's Lovecraftian Mythos was kept a secret up until its very release. What we first find is the Hunt, thrust into it scared and desperate for answers.

For starters, I will use only information and evidence that can be found inside of the game. I will save my personal interpretations and beliefs for the end, so that you can make up your own mind about the evidence presented.

In Yharnam, blood flows like water. You will find no bars in Yharnam, no pubs or taverns. Only blood is found in Yharnam. The Pungent Blood Cocktail tells us: *"In Yharnam, they produce more blood than alcohol, as the former is far more intoxicating."* Blood is the source of pleasure, entertainment, worship, and devotion in Yharnam. Even Arianna, a prostitute by trade, introduces herself to the Hunter not by offering sexual services, but instead a vial of her blood. But it's not just any blood that flows through Yharnam; only blood permitted by the Healing Church is allowed to flow. The Old Blood, specifically the blood of Ebrietas, is administered to the population by special doctors known as Blood Ministers, who carry on an art that was first pioneered by the First Vicar, Laurence. We've already discussed how Ebrietas gets her name from a species of butterfly, but she also gets her name from a latin word meaning *drunkenness* or *intoxication*. Indeed, the blood of Ebrietas not only aided to cleanse Yharnam of disease but also provided the citizens with a

drug more addictive and more intoxicating than alcohol. But with the rampant spread of the Old Blood came the Scourge of the Beasts.

Once Old Yharnam had been cleansed and knowledge of the Scourge became public knowledge, a new way of dealing with the threat was required. Secrecy would no longer be enough, and so the Workshop was retired and sealed. Instead, with the Healing Church in its new position of power, the Healing Church Hunters were born. At the forefront of this new movement would be Ludwig, the new head of the Healing Church's martial force. Gehrman tells us the following: *"The Healing Church and the Blood Ministers who belong to it were once guardians of the hunters, in the times of the hunter Ludwig."* According to the Sword Hunter Badge: "*Ludwig was the first of many Healing Church hunters to come, many of Whom were clerics."* Not much is known of Ludwig's origins, but from his Radiant Sword Hunter Badge we learn that Ludwig was part of a lineage of chivalrous warriors known as the Holy Blades: "*The radiant sword indicates the heirs to the will of Ludwig. These hunters, also known as Holy Blades, are what remains of an ancient line of heroes that date back to a very early age of honour and chivalry."*

Ludwig had a very different approach to hunting beasts than his predecessors in the Workshop had, which we can see from the details found in the weapons of choice of Healing Church Hunters.

"A trick weapon typically used by Healing Church hunters. It is said that the silver sword was employed by Ludwig, the first hunter of the church. When transformed, it combines with its sheath to form a greatsword. The Healing Church workshop began with Ludwig, and departed from old Gehrman's techniques to provide hunters with the means to hunt more terrifying beasts, and perhaps things still worse. -Ludwig's Holy Blade

"A rifle typically used by Healing Church hunters. It is said that this rifle was employed by Ludwig, the first hunter of the Church.

Its long, heavy barrel makes up in range for what it lacks in reload speed. Ludwig's Rifle exhibits several departures from the workshop's design, suggesting that the Church anticipated much larger inhuman beasts." -Ludwig's Rifle

From these two weapons we can see a drastic shift in design from Gehrman's Workshop to Ludwig's. While the Hunters of Gehrman's time favored agile weapons, quick movement, and easily concealable tools, Ludwig's Hunters wielded weapons with great force. These Hunters no longer hid in the shadows, they walked openly, wielding their weapons. After Old Yharnam, it had become painfully clear to the Healing Church that only more and more dangerous creatures would arise from the Old Blood, and so more powerful weapons would be required.

Ludwig sought to deal with the Scourge of the Beast in a very different manner than his predecessors. In the time of Laurence and Gehrman, the Healing Church and the Workshop operated in secrecy. The School of Mensis quietly researched, Laurence perfected Blood Ministration, and Gehrman's Hunters acted as a clean-up crew, fixers of problems. An individual would succumb and the Hunters would quietly remove them in the middle of the night, leaving the population none the wiser.

With Ludwig however, a new approach was taken: Do not ignore the populace; **arm** the populace. We see this from the Yharnam Hunter Attire: *"Ludwig, the first hunter of the Healing Church, once recruited Yharnamites to serve as hunters. This hunter's attire was made for new recruits, and has excellent straightforward defense. But not nearly enough to allow an ordinary man to stand any real chance against the beasts."* Ludwig would deal with the beasts not through secrecy, but through purges or *Hunts*. Arm the population, inform them, and work alongside the citizens of Yharnam to battle the beasts. The Church called for the Hunts.

It would, unfortunately, cause a sort of never-ending cycle. Beasts rise, in order to combat the Beasts the citizens rise up, imbibe in the Old Blood, and strike them down. Now that they've been tainted by the Old Blood they inevitably become Beasts,

causing more citizens to rise up and imbibe in the Old Blood. Even more problematic was the fact that as the Hunts called for stronger Hunters, stronger Hunters would become stronger Beasts: "*Ludwig was the first of many Healing Church hunters to come, many of Whom were clerics. As it was, clerics transformed into the most hideous beasts.*"

Hunters would become drunk on blood, addled by it, **intoxicated** by it. The Hunters would become a threat. And so it was that we find ourselves now faced with a different group, one that seems to be particularly mysterious: The Hunters of Hunters. In Central Yharnam the Hunter encounters Eileen the Crow, who warns them sternly: "*Prepare yourself for the worst. There are no humans left. They're all flesh-hungry beasts, now.*" It's the polar opposite of Djura's warning, that the beasts are still humans. Eileen belongs to a mysterious organization known as the Hunters of Hunters, detailed in the Hunter Rune: *"This red-smudged rune means "Hunter," and has been adopted by those who have taken the Hunter of Hunters oath. These watchmen admonish those who have become addled with blood. Be they men or beasts, anyone who has threatened the pledgers of the "Hunter" oath surely has an issue with blood."*

The Hunters of Hunters, it would appear, are an order old as the Workshop itself, tasked with disposing of Hunters who have been lost to the intoxication of the Old Blood. The Crow Hunter Badge tells us: "*The badge of the Hunter of Hunters is quietly passed down from generation to generation, usually to an outsider from the hinterlands.*" The use of the singular **an outsider** seems to imply that there is only ever one Hunter of Hunters at any one point in time, once a generation. It is interesting that it specifies that the Hunters of Hunters are typically outsiders. Eileen herself speaks with an accent unlike a Yharnamite. Perhaps, whoever the Hunters of Hunters are, it was decided that Yharnamites, blood-drunk that they were, were not to be trusted with this important task.

But it's the Hunters of Hunters origin that interests me the most. Where on earth did they come from? The Crowfeather Attire gives us a small amount of information: "*Hunters of Hunters dress*

as crows to suggest sky burial. The first Hunter of Hunters came from a foreign land, and gave the dead a virtuous native funeral ritual, rather than impose a blasphemous Yharnam burial service upon them. With the hope that former compatriots might be returned to the skies, and find rest in the Hunter's Dream." The explicit mentioning of the Hunter's Dream is very, very peculiar. Eileen herself appears to know about the Hunter's Dream, as if the PC Hunter attacks and dies to her, she will respond by instructing them to *"Tell the little doll I said hello."* Like Djura, Eileen appears to have at one point been a dreamer, a Paleblood Hunter like the PC.

"No more dreams for me. This is my last chance."

It's not the only link that Eileen and the Hunters of Hunters have to Gehrman and the Hunter's Dream; the Blades of Mercy, the weapon of the Hunters of Hunters, states: "*A special trick weapon passed down among hunters of hunters. One of the oldest weapons of the workshop. Splits into two when activated. The weapon's warped blades are forged with siderite, a rare mineral of the heavens."* One of the oldest weapons indeed, the Blades of Mercy are one of only two trick weapons made of siderite, a rare mineral that fell from the heavens. The other is Gehrman's Burial Blade, the first of the trick weapons: "*A masterpiece that defined the entire array of weapons crafted at the workshop. Its blade is forged with siderite, said to have fallen from the heavens."*

Exactly what connection Gehrman has to the Hunters of Hunters is unknown. It's possible that the Hunters of Hunters were formed to police and oversee the Workshop, or it's possible they may be a splinter faction that separated from Gehrman. Whatever their reasons, their methods are clear: find Hunters who have succumb to bloodlust and end them. Two such Hunters would be two of Eileen's targets, Henryk and Gascoigne.

Father Gascoigne is the first official boss in Bloodborne. While it's possible to fight the Cleric Beast, that boss is optional. Gascoigne serves as the first true boss fight in the game, and he is one that serves as a very cold wake-up call to the player. Like many Souls veterans, I walked into Bloodborne with a very specific mindset:

caution. Study the opponent, look for weaknesses, wait for their guard to be down, strike once, back, watch, strike. It's a very slow, cautious, passive playstyle that the Souls games have hardened in many players. Gascoigne seems to be placed so early in the game **specifically** for players like that. Gascoigne has the exact same tools that the Hunter can wield. He uses a Hunter Axe as his weapon and a Blunderbuss as his firearm. He can be staggered, and he can stagger. He's a parallel to the player in this manner. Really the only difference between Gascoigne and the Hunter is the insanely aggressive manner in which he fights. Gascoigne charges with blind abandonment, he weaves through the fight swiftly, dodging attacks and keeping pressure on the Hunter. It's almost a direct message to the player from the developers: "You have the same tools as him, why are you losing? He's not being unfair, he's not cheating. He's just playing the game, just like you. So why is he **slaughtering** you?" The player very quickly learns that they must adapt to Gascoigne or they will die. Passivity is no longer a valid strategy, in order to master Bloodborne the player must be swift, aggressive, and unrelenting like Gascoigne.

But once Gascoigne's health gets low enough, he will transform. He will succumb fully to the Scourge, becoming a powerful Beast that will relentlessly assault the Hunter. But to really understand Gascoigne, let's start at the beginning and analyze what we can learn about him from the game itself.

From Gascoigne's Attire we learn that: *"'Father' is a title used for clerics in a foreign land, and there is no such rank in the Healing Church."* This would seem to imply that Gascoigne came to Yharnam, like many others, in search of the miraculous Blood Ministration which was rumoured to cure any disease. The PC Hunter was one such individual, as was Gilbert and likely many others. Like Eileen and Gilbert, Gascoigne's voice has an accent that differs slightly from the Yharnamites. Seeing as Gascoigne wears attire similar to that of a Healing Church Watcher and wields the weapons of the Workshop, he was clearly trained as a Healing Church Hunter after he came to Yharnam. But his attire notes that: "*The dingy scarf is a Holy Shawl and symbol of the Healing Church, from which Gascoigne would eventually part ways."* It's unclear exactly why Gascoigne left the Church, but perhaps he left in order to raise a family. After all, Gascoigne's

daughters can be spoken to in Yharnam, hiding in their house. Indeed, the daughters provide the last, key pieces of information on Gascoigne: *"Are you a hunter? Then, please, will you look for my mum? Daddy never came back from the hunt, and she went to find him, but now she's gone, too... I'm all alone... and scared..."* It would seem that when the hunt was called, Gascoigne answered. Though he had left the Church, he still rose up to cleanse the streets, along with the rest of Yharnam. When he didn't return, his wife Viola went off looking for him. "*My m-mum wears a red jeweled brooch. It's so big and... and beautiful. You won't miss it."* When we find Gascoigne, he is hacking a corpse to pieces. He turns to face the Hunter, having finally succumb to the Old Blood.

"Beasts all over the shop... You'll be one of them, sooner or later."

On a nearby balcony, a red brooch dangles from the corpse of a dead woman. But how did it all come to this? What happened to Ludwig? What is the story behind Father Gascoigne? And why is Eileen in Yharnam?

What follows is purely my own interpretation and belief based on the evidence I have gathered. Do not consider any of this as solid fact. Instead, use it as my interpretation, so that you can gather your own beliefs.

Everything changed after Old Yharnam. The Church, seen as saviors, were now in control. No longer did they require secrecy, instead they flourished and gained power. With this power and with the spread of the Scourge, the Workshop was retired and replaced with the Healing Church Hunters, led by a Hunter named Ludwig. Ludwig was a courageous, honorable, and chivalrous man who took a new approach to the Hunters by recruiting openly, training the population of Yharnam to combat the dangers of the hunt, and working on designing new weapons to eliminate the Beasts without issue.

Ludwig was the heir to a legacy of ancient heroes known as the Holy Blades, dating back many generations. It's possible he was

one of Gehrman's apprentices, who succeeded Gehrman after his retirement and was put in charge of the new, reformed Workshop in the Upper Cathedral Ward. It's in this Workshop that we can find the Radiant Sword Hunter Badge, which allows the player to purchase Ludwig's Blade and Rifle.

But the Radiant Sword Hunter Badge also unlocks another piece of equipment: the Tomb Prospector Attire. It is described as follows: *"Attire of tomb prospectors who explore the old labyrinth on behalf of the Healing Church. The Healing Church traces its roots to Byrgenwerth, and is therefore aware of the ruins' true importance. They contain much more than mere hunter trinkets, indeed, they hide the very secrets of the old Great Ones. sought after by those with the insight to imagine greatness."*

We can now get a bit of a better picture of Ludwig's arsenal, judging from the equipment made available by obtaining his Badge. Ludwig wielded a Holy Blade and a Rifle, his weapons of choice. Along with them, he wore Tomb Prospector Attire, or at least he did at one point. It's possible that Ludwig traveled into the Labyrinth in search of a weapon or an answer to put an end to the Scourge once and for all. Maybe he simply wanted the Truth, to know where the Scourge came from. What he found was the Holy Moonlight Sword.

"*An arcane sword discovered long ago by Ludwig. When blue moonlight dances around the sword, and it channels the abyssal cosmos, its great blade will hurl a shadowy lightwave. The Holy Moonlight Sword is synonymous with Ludwig, the Holy Blade, but few have ever set eyes on the great blade, and whatever guidance it has to offer, it seems to be of a very private, elusive sort.*" -Holy Moonlight Sword

It must have been fate, that the heir to the legacy of the Holy Blades would find such a weapon. With it in hand, Ludwig truly did become the Holy Blade, a hero to the people who feared the Scourge of the Beast, and a leader to the Church Hunters who followed him into battle. But as the Moonlight Sword's description states, few people ever saw the blade. It would seem

that Ludwig kept it very close to him, not allowing the others to lay eyes upon it.

"Aah, you were at my side, all along. My true mentor... My guiding moonlight..."

The Holy Moonlight Sword was more than just a blade. The blade offered Guidance to Ludwig, as is described by the Guidance rune: *"When Ludwig closed his eyes, he saw darkness, or perhaps nothingness, and that is where he discovered the tiny beings of light. Ludwig was certain that these playful dancing sprites offered "guidance" and emptied Ludwig of his fears at least in the midst of a hunt."* When he hunted, Ludwig allowed the sword to guide him. He closed his eyes and followed the guidance of the Moonlight Sword as he cut down beasts. He had no fear in his heart, and became a weapon for the Healing Church.

"Without fear in our hearts, we're little different from the beasts themselves." -Eileen the Crow

The shift in Ludwig's personality did not go unnoticed. Ludwig's dialogue reveals that there were those who accused him of being a "beast-possessed degenerate." Even in the back of his mind, he knew that was he was doing was wrong. *"Good hunter, have you seen the thread of light? Just a hair, a fleeting thing, yet I clung to it, steeped as I was in the stench of blood and beasts. I never wanted to know, what it really was. Really, I didn't."* Yet he continued to use the Holy Moonlight Sword and follow its Guidance, hoping to secure a future where the Healing Church Hunters became honorable warriors who protected the people. He would suffer any denigration if it meant that goal could be achieved.

In the end, Ludwig became further and further steeped in bloodshed. With each swing of the Holy Moonlight Sword, he descended further into beasthood. Eventually, blood-drunk as he was, Ludwig was dragged into the Hunter's Nightmare, cursed to wallow in a pit of corpses for all eternity.

With Ludwig gone, the Healing Church Hunters slowly began to fall apart. Organized Hunts became mobs as Yharnamites wandered the streets, dragging the infected out and burning them at the stake. The Hunters themselves began to rely more and more on Communion for strength, the Healing Church administering more Old Blood to their Hunters in order to give them the power to vanquish the Beasts. One of these Hunters was Father Gascoigne. Gascoigne had come to Yharnam in search of a cure to his disease, seeing the famous Blood Ministration of Yharnam as his last chance at salvation. It was there that he was trained as a Hunter, possibly by a man named Henryk. Very little is known of Henryk, but he wears the garb not of a Healing Church Hunter but of a Workshop Hunter, one of Gehrman's. Henryk is also mentioned multiple times as being an *old* hunter, and the voice file he uses as an NPC Hunter are those of the *Aged* category in the game's files, the category designed for the elderly.

Gascoigne and Henryk would quickly become a powerful duo, partner Hunters and good friends. According to Henryk's Hunter Garb: "*The taciturn old hunter Henryk was once partners with Father Gascoigne, and though they were a fierce and gallant duo, their partnership led to Henryk's tragically long life.*" The last sentence particularly interests me, the use of the phrase a *tragically* long life. It's possible that Henryk, old as he was, either grew sick or weakened in his age. Gascoigne not only wanted to see his closest friend live, but he had another reason for wanting the old Hunter to continue on; he loved Henryk's daughter.

"Yes okay, thank you very much mister[or 'miss' if the PC is female] hunter! I love you almost as much as mum and dad, ***and grandad****!"* -Gascoigne's Unnamed Daughter

Indeed when we encounter Henryk we find him in Oedon Tomb just as we found Gascoigne, only Henryk is not standing by the grave where Gascoigne was found; he is standing in front of the corpse of Viola, Gascoigne's wife. But Henryk is not himself any longer, he has succumb to the Old Blood. Gascoigne had fallen in love with Viola, Henryk's daughter. Perhaps Gascoigne convinced Henryk, in his old and weakened state, to accept Communion from the Healing Church. The old Workshop Hunter was likely

wary of the Old Blood, but was convinced by his son in law, the father of his grandchildren, to accept the Ministration.

Gascoigne too had accepted the Ministration, but in his case there were complications. *"If you find my mum, give her this music box. It plays one of daddy's favorite songs. And when daddy forgets us we play it for him so he remembers. Mum's so silly, running off without it!"* While the Old Blood of the Healing Church can cure any disease, it cannot repair a damaged mind. Father Gascoigne had come to Yharnam in search of a cure to his mental illness, but the Blood Ministration had failed. Even the tainted blood of the Great Ones could not fix the bouts of insanity he suffered. It's possible that during his episodes in which he forgot the faces of his family, Gascoigne grew violent, irrational, or paranoid. Viola, his beloved wife, would play him a lullaby. It would ease his mind and help him to stay grounded and sane. But Gascoigne, intoxicated as he was with the Old Blood, continued to Hunt and continued to accept Communion, the Ministration of Blood. When Gascoigne failed to return from the Hunt, Viola left her children locked inside and fled to find him, to bring him home... but she forgot the music box. When she found him, he was drenched in blood, killing man and beast alike. She pleaded with him to come home, to remember her. But he would have none of it. Viola died that night, killed by the man she loved.

If the player uses the music box in the fight against Father Gascoigne, he suffers noticeable pain. He grasps his head, muttering and moaning. How else could he possibly react, as he remembers the terrible things he did to his beloved Viola? Henryk soon goes searching for Viola and Gascoigne, fearful of what may have happened to them. When he found Viola's corpse, he was empty. His tragically long life would be ended by Eileen the Crow, Hunter of Hunters.

"This too is hunters' work, but bears no honor. A burden you may choose to carry." -Eileen the Crow

If the Hunter assists Eileen in killing Henryk, then after the Blood Moon has risen they will find Eileen mortally wounded in front of the Grand Cathedral. *"I'm afraid I've made a bit of a blunder. I'm*

*just going to have a short rest. Oh, don't worry, I've taken blood. Enough to save an old woman. No more dreams for me. This is my last chance. What a fool I am, I'll have to tread carefully. But that **thing** still lies in wait. Turn back. This is my score to settle."*

Many years ago, Gehrman founded the Workshop. Much like the PC Hunter can, Gehrman wielded two weapons: the Burial Blade and the Blades of Mercy. Both weapons were forged of siderite by Gehrman, The First Hunter. Gehrman was not alone as a Hunter, he had several apprentices who he trained to carry on his legacy. Him and his apprentices practiced a special art known as Quickening, as evidenced by the Old Hunter's Bone: *"The bone of an old hunter whose name is lost. It is said that he was an apprentice to old Gehrman, and a practitioner of the art of Quickening, a technique particular to the first hunters."* There are only four individuals in the entire game who can use the art of Quickening: The PC Hunter, if they clutch the Old Hunter's Bone, Gehrman, who uses a significantly more powerful version of quickening, Maria, Gehrman's greatest pupil, and an individual known only as the Bloody Crow.

The Bloody Crow is found in the Grand Cathedral as the final fight in Eileen's questline. It is a **very** difficult fight. It would seem that Eileen came to Yharnam with the goal of hunting down this mark, the Bloody Crow; along the way she slew Henryk and would have slain Gascoigne if the Hunter had not beaten her to the punch. We know very little of the Bloody Crow, but we can see that he wields a Chikage blade and has strong ties to Cainhurst, with his use of Numbing Mist and his dropping of a Blood Rapture rune. Most bizarre is that he wears the Crowfeather Garb of a Hunter of Hunters. The Bloody Crow of Cainhurst, evidently one of the First Hunters as evidenced by his use of the art of Quickening. Here we can paint a possible picture:

In the infant days of the Workshop Gehrman trained his apprentices and gave one of them the Blades of Mercy. Mercy is a central theme to Gehrman, it appears to be his goal to grant mercy to Hunters who either are trapped in the Dream or have succumb to bloodlust. This apprentice he tasked with the important job of acting as an unseen watcher of the Workshop,

forming a new order of people separated from Communion and the Old Blood of Yharnam. What happened next is very unclear and for the most part completely unexplained. Perhaps this apprentice traveled to Cainhurst, or perhaps traveled into the hinterlands to train the next Hunter of Hunters who would travel to Yharnam. Whatever happened, we can see the results:

The Bloody Crow of Cainhurst, possibly the first Hunter of Hunters or possibly the one who supervised and trained Eileen. Eileen wishes to put him to rest, to grant him **mercy**. But what fascinated me the most about Eileen is what happens if the player never encounters her at all.

If the PC Hunter never speaks to Eileen then if they travel to the Grand Cathedral after the Blood Moon has risen, they will be suddenly attacked by Eileen herself. Eileen accuses the Hunter of succumbing to bloodlust. It is through this dialogue that Eileen reveals how she truly feels: *"The hunters must die... The nightmare must end..."* Eileen herself knows full well the way in which the Hunter's Dream sustains and propagates the Hunters. Indeed, the Hunters themselves are being manipulated by the Great Ones into carrying out their eldritch tasks. What if there were no more Hunters, none left to seek the blood or carry out the will of the Blood Moon. Would the nightmare end? Think of the way we as players thrill every time we slay a boss, how we rush to the Dream to grow stronger, how we want only to continue hunting, to continue growing in power.

"Few hunters can resist the intoxication of the hunt. Look at you, just the same as all the rest..."

Maybe she's right.

Chapter Five: Valtr, The League, and the Vermin

"The night brims with defiled scum, and is permeated by their rotten stench. Just think, now you're all set to hunt and kill to your heart's content!"

-Valtr, Beast Eater

The Beasts and the Kin. These are the two types of enemies that we face in Bloodborne. One is born of the Scourge of the Beast, humans tainted from the influence of the Old Blood. The other are ascended humans, who have purged their body of the Scourge and have become Kin of the Cosmos, pure beings. There's something else though, some strange third **thing** that seems to be right around the corner, yet somehow avoid description. It's almost like there's something we just can't put our fingers on, right in front of our nose. To try and pinpoint what this thing is let us examine Valtr, the Beast Eater, and his League of confederates.

For starters, I will use only information and evidence that can be found inside of the game. I will save my personal interpretations and beliefs for the end, so that you can make up your own mind about the evidence presented.

We first encounter Valtr in the Forbidden Woods, where he introduces himself to the player. *"I am Valtr, Master of the League. Members of the League cleanse the streets of all the filth that's spread about during the hunt. Like any half-decent hunter ought to, you know? Haven't you seen enough of these wretched beasts, freakish slugs, and mad doctors? Sentence these fiends to death."* The League appears to have been an organization that exists during the transitionary period from Gehrman's workshop into Ludwig's, however Valtr has been in Yharnam for quite some time.

According to the Constable Garb, worn by Valtr, there is a rather popular fable in Yharnam. "*Once upon a time a troupe of foreign constables chased a beast all the way to Yharnam, and this is what they wore. The constables became victims of the beast, except for one survivor, who in turn devoured the creature whole, all by himself.*" As Valtr's title is that of the Beast Eater, it's very reasonable to assume that he is the constable from this fable. It was when Valtr consumed a Beast, an utterly unholy act, that an Oath Rune was born within him: Impurity.

"This rune, discovered inside the forbidden beast eater, came to symbolize "Impurity," and the oath of The League. Confederates of The League hunt to discover vermin. Vermin writhe within filth, and are the root of man's impurity. Crush all vermin without hesitation." -Impurity.

When Valtr performed such a tainted act, he gained the Impurity Rune and the ability to see Vermin, and with this ability he formed the League. The League, dedicated to hunting down Vermin, consisted of individuals who were brought face to face with the root of man's impurity and suffered the consequences. We only know of three confederates, other than Valtr. The first is Yamamura the Wanderer, who is described by his garb as: *"Garb of a distant Eastern land, worn by Yamamura the Wanderer. This Eastern warrior pursued a beast for honorable revenge, then became a hunter of the League. But when he stared straight into impurity, it drove him mad."* It would appear Yamamura's membership of the League was rather short-lived, as as soon as the Impurity oath was committed to his memory he was driven mad. So while Yamamura plays a relatively minor role in the League, two more significant figures are the Madaras twins.

From the Butcher Mask, we learn it is a: "*Mask of the Madaras twins, denizens of the Forbidden Woods, likely belonging to the older of the two. The twins grew up in silent kinship with a poisonous snake. Eventually they learned human ways, and became hunters. When they discovered vermin even in their beloved snake, the younger brother is said to have murdered the older.*" Furthermore, we learn from the Butcher Garb that: "*Both the twins became hunters, and brought back and dissected their*

beast prey, in order to support the villagers in their forbidden research."

What was the forbidden research of the villagers? What twisted discovery brought Yamamura to madness? And most importantly, what **are** the Vermin?

What follows is purely my own interpretation and belief based on the evidence I have gathered. Do not consider any of this as solid fact. Instead, use it as my interpretation, so that you can gather your own beliefs.

Some time early in Yharnam's history, a group of foreign constables chased a beast into the city. The beast, however, turned and devoured the constables one by one. The sole survivor was Valtr, who slew the beast and, in some twisted, maddened hunger for revenge, devoured the beast in turn. This unholy act branded Valtr as the Beast Eater, and within him was born the Oath Rune: Impurity. When Valtr turned and gazed throughout the city of Yharnam he found he could now see those who had become impure, tainted with filth. In order to combat this new threat, Valtr formed the League, gathering a group of confederates and branding them with the Impurity Rune so that they could see the true root of man's impurity.

In regards to the timeline of when exactly this took place, it appears to have taken place during the time when Hunters were in the transitionary period away from Gehrman's workshop, but not yet fully formed with Ludwig's. We see that Valtr favored the Whirligig Saw, a weapon designed by the Powder Kegs, and so it's likely that the League was in full force during the time of Old Yharnam. Two confederates of the League would be the Madaras Twins, wild folk from the Forbidden Woods who were trained in the art of hunting. The Madaras twins had a great love for their beloved poisonous snake, alongside whom they had grown up together. The Madaras Whistle tells us: *"The twins grew up alongside a poisonous snake, and developed a silent, inhuman kinship. The poisonous snake grew uncontrollably, raised on a healthy diet of beast entrails."* It appears that the Twins would bring the victims of their hunts back to the Woods with them, not only feeding them to their snake, but also handing them over to

the villagers to aid in their research, as referenced in the Butcher Garb.

But what research was occurring in the Forbidden Woods? It's simple: Ashen Blood. The Healing Church was, at this time, using the Forbidden Woods and the nearby poisonous swamp as their laboratory for the research and development of Ashen Blood. The Healing Church was studying the parasitic leeches found in the poisonous swamp, not only to develop it for use in Old Yharnam, but also to discover the source of the poison. The source of the poison, of the filth. Where did this poison come from? Recall the Butcher Mask: "*When they discovered vermin even in their beloved snake, the younger brother is said to have murdered the older.*"

"A centipede-like creature discovered on successful hunts by League hunters. Vermin, found hidden within filth, are only seen by League confederates, and are the root of man's impurity. The League has assumed the task of finding and crushing all vermin. Perhaps there is some mercy in the madness. Those who wish to see vermin can, and those who choose to are provided with boundless purpose." -Vermin

The poison swamp was teeming with Vermin, unseen by those who had not committed the Impurity Rune to memory. As the Madaras twins slaughtered the infected, Vermin-riddled beasts and fed them to their snake, the creature became tainted and riddled with the parasitic creatures. This is the source of the Snake Parasite of the Forbidden Woods. Vermin infested the local wildlife, and in turn the wildlife infested the villagers. The Snakes spat poison at their enemies, the Ashen Blood turned against the very people who had developed it in the first place.

Ashen Blood, the poison, the Vermin. Perhaps it is the case that **all cases of poison in the game are cases of Ashen Blood, and in turn are caused by the Vermin.** After all, the antidote tablets that were used to treat Ashen Blood are still in circulation today. If we look at the Nightmare Frontier, for example, we can recall the poisonous swamp that loveable, trustworthy Patches knocks us into. Here we find countless leeches, and large creatures known as Crawlers. Interestingly enough, the Crawlers do not take extra damage as either Beasts or Kin. They are something else: Vermin.

Infesting the Loran Silverbeasts we even find more maggots, likely teeming with Vermin themselves. We as players of a videogame are so conditioned to think of *poison* as some random, nameless, vague side effect that we never stop to think what this poison actually is, and if it has a root cause.

This brings us to the Bloodlickers. Large, flea-like creatures, they are first discovered in Cainhurst alongside a group of parasitic leeches. While described as beasts, interestingly enough they do not suffer from damage bonuses against beasts. They're something else. Not kin, not beast: Vermin.

What if the Vermin were to infest a human? Not just one or two vermin, but an entire colony of the parasites squirming and writhing within the blood of a human being. No doubt they would be tainted. No doubt they would be forbidden. No doubt they would be **Vile.**

Chapter Six: Cainhurst Castle, The Executioners, and Queen Annalise

"Once, a scholar betrayed his fellows at Byrgenwerth and brought forbidden blood back with him to Cainhurst Castle. It was there that the first of the inhuman Vilebloods was born. The Vilebloods are fiendish creatures who threaten the purity of the Church's blood healing. The Ruler of the Vilebloods is still alive today. And so, to honor my master's wishes, I search. For the path to Cainhurst Castle."

-Alfred, Vileblood Hunter

If you're like me, you were excited the very moment the Stagecoach pulled up to greet you at Hemwick. The journey to Cainhurst Castle and the exploration of the new area provides a nice breath of fresh air and a pleasant interruption in Bloodborne in which we are shown a whole new area with a whole new mystery. Cainhurst is an area unlike any other in Bloodborne. To be perfectly honest... it doesn't really fit in, does it? A forsaken Castle ruled by an Undead Queen. The weeping ghosts of murdered women wandering haunted chambers. Man-eating gargoyles lying in wait to ambush unsuspecting prey... Really, the area would fit much more into Demon's Souls than it does into Bloodborne. Cainhurst is so unlike any other area in Bloodborne, even from a gameplay perspective. After all, Cainhurst is the only area in the game that offers a Dark Souls-style Covenant for the player to join. So to get to the bottom of the mystery of Castle Cainhurst let's start by taking a look at Cainhurst itself, what we know about it, what we can glean, and what monsters wander its halls.

For starters, I will use only information and evidence that can be found inside of the game. I will save my personal interpretations and beliefs for the end, so that you can make up your own mind about the evidence presented.

While in Yharnam blood is an object of worship, in Cainhurst blood is an object of desire. The Nobles of Cainhurst were elitist

and aristocratic, enjoying form and elegance over strength or functionality, as described the Knight's Set: *"Attire of the knights of Cainhurst. A regal piece graced by intricate goldwork. The Cainhurst way is a mix of nostalgia and bombast. They take great pride in the blood-stained corpses of beasts that they leave behind, confident that they will stand as examples of decadent art."* In Cainhurst, your status at Court is everything. The closer you are to the Queen, the more important you are. The further away you are, the less you matter. The Blood Rapture Rune: *"This rune resonates with servants of the Queen, carrier of the Child of Blood, who yearn for their Queen's blood with little hope of requitement. For them, they find solace in "Blood Rapture," that serves as a surrogate for their desires."*

The highest of honors in Cainhurst was to be named a Vileblood, one of the elite inner circle of Queen Annalise. As evidenced by the ritual Queen Annalise makes the PC Hunter perform should they choose to become a Vileblood, the Vilebloods imbibed in the Queen's blood. While Yharnamites share blood through injection and transfusion, the nobles of Cainhurst seemed to drink it directly from the source, as Queen Annalise extends her wrist to the Hunter. The Vilebloods were the elite guard of the Queen, and would travel out to hunt for her, bringing tribute back to her in the form of Blood Dregs. We will explore the Vilebloods and Queen Annalise further in a later section, but for now let's focus on the lesser important figures in Cainhurst and what information we can gather from them.

"The old nobles, long-time imbibers of blood, are no strangers to the sanguine plague, and the disposal of beasts was a discrete task left to their servants, or knights, as they were called for the sake of appearances." –Reiterpallasch

While there are beasts in Cainhurst, they are much different from the beasts of Yharnam. There is no sign of lycanthropy, the main symptom of the condition we refer to as the Scourge of the Beast anywhere to be found in Cainhurst. Instead, the beasts of Cainhurst are twisted, malformed things that drain the blood from the ground. The official description of the Bloodlickers reads: *"With no host left to defend Cainhurst Castle from the*

beastly siege, these deadly, vile creatures prowl the grounds, gorging themselves on the tainted fluid of the fallen." Indeed, the Bloodlickers seem far more interested in draining blood from corpses than they are of the PC Hunter. Unlike Yharnam's beasts which rip and tear flesh to shreds in pure rage, the Bloodlickers move quietly from corpse to corpse, drinking.

We have here an example of a very different kind of Beast, one wholly unlike the Beasts of Yharnam. Yharnam Beasts, we know, are the result of individuals succumbing to the tainted blood of the Great Ones, infected thanks to the use of blood ministration. The Bloodlickers, infested with Vermin, must have a different origin. Let us recall what Alfred says about Cainhurst. "*Once, a scholar betrayed his fellows at Byrgenwerth and brought forbidden blood back with him to Cainhurst Castle.*" Whatever blood was brought to Cainhurst, it was most certainly **not** the blood of the Great Ones. It was something different, forbidden, **impure.** The introduction of this forbidden blood led to a new mission by the then-burgeoning Healing Church, and the formation of the Executioners.

"*In his time, Master Logarius led his executioners into Cainhurst Castle to cleanse it of the Vileblood. But all did not go well and Master Logarius became a blessed anchor, guarding us from evil. ...Tragic, tragic time... ... that Master Logarius should be abandoned in the accursed domain of the Vilebloods. I must free him, so that he may be properly honored in martyrdom."* -Alfred, Vileblood Hunter

Little is known of the Executioners. They were a group of Hunters who, led by a man named Logarius, traveled to Cainhurst and battled the Vilebloods. It would seem the Executioners existed in the very early days of the Healing Church, back when the Church was still operating mostly in secrecy. The Executioner Attire reads: *"Attire worn by the band of executioners commanded by the martyr Logarius. Later became the basis for all Church attire, with its heavy draping of Holy Shawl."* This would seem to suggest that the Executioners were the first case of an organized group of the Church operating in the open, as before then there was no section of the Church wearing their familiar uniform. What this

means of Alfred is unknown. He claims to be a simple Hunter, perhaps he simply sought to emulate the teachings of Logarius. He certainly has a great deal of veneration for Logarius, his entire mission being to complete Logarius' mission once and for all to elevate him to true martyrdom.

Whatever Alfred's motivations behind following the path of the Executioner, we know that the Executioners of old did battle against the Cainhurst Vilebloods. From the accounts we have access to, it was not a close battle... Logarius' Wheel describes itself as being: "*Used to slaughter the Vilebloods in Cainhurst. Bathed in pools of their blood, and forever steeped in their ire.*" **Slaughter** is the key word here. The nobles of Cainhurst were systematically executed, the Vilebloods were bludgeoned to death by the mighty Wheels of Logarius. For all their elegance and beauty, the Cainhurst Vilebloods were no match for the fury of the Executioners. But there was one Vileblood who could not be slain, and this brings us to the final topic of our current analysis.

"I am Annalise, Queen of Castle Cainhurst. Ruler of the Vilebloods, and sworn enemy of the church."

Annalise is a very strange figure in Bloodborne and, like I mentioned earlier, doesn't really seem to **fit.** She is most assuredly something far more than simply human. In fact, the Queen is immortal. There is no way to kill her; even Alfred, who rips her limb from limb, smashes her into pulp, tears out her organs, smears her against the floor, and leaves her nothing more than a pile of blood and meat, fails to kill her. Indeed, she is left simply **writhing eerily.** *"What good's your immortality now! Try stirring up trouble in this sorry state! All mangled and twisted, with every inside on the outside, for all the world to see!"*-Alfred. The Queenly Flesh, a chunk of meat the PC Hunter can retrieve from her remains, reads: *"This pinkish lump of flesh remains warm, as if cursed. All hail the undying queen of blood!"* Annalise is never dead. Her **consciousness** remains inside of the meat, and can be used to repair her. Indeed, Annalise can even be restored from her mangled state if the Hunter brings the Queenly Flesh to the corpse in the Altar of Despair. But Annalise is not unique in this. She is not the only immortal Queen in Bloodborne.

Upon defeating Yharnam, Queen of Pthumeru, the Hunter receives the Yharnam Stone. It appears to be meaty, organic remains, and even has the faint outline of a fetus within it. The Yharnam Stone reads: *"The Queen lies dead, but her horrific consciousness is only asleep, and it stirs in unsettling motions."*

What follows is purely my own interpretation and belief based on the evidence I have gathered. Do not consider any of this as solid fact. Instead, use it as my interpretation, so that you can gather your own beliefs.

In the depths of ancient Pthumeru, the Byrgenwerth Scholars studied and researched the Old Blood of the Great Ones. However, the Scholars found much more than the Great Ones, they found those who had once worshipped them: the Pthumerians. It's not exactly clear if they directly located Yharnam, or if they simply gathered blood samples from the Pthumerians themselves. However it's most likely that some of Yharnam's blood was recovered and researched. The Old Blood, while to be feared, was not forbidden. It seems strange that the Scholars, seekers of truth, would label anything as forbidden. Yharnam's blood must have been so tainted, so **vile** and **impure**, that it was not to be toyed with. Perhaps this blood was teeming with Vermin, the source of the Pthumerian's seemingly magical abilities. Yharnam's mastery over blood is unlike anything seen in Bloodborne. During the battle against her she seems to teleport, spray blood from her fingertips, and summons blades in the air of pure blood. Yharnam also appears to be able to project herself from her prison in Pthumeru, appearing in both the Nightmare of Mensis and the Moonside Lake. Neither human nor Great One, Yharnam is some twisted, impure mix of the two, possibly as a result of her impregnation by Oedon, the Formless Great One of Blood.

One scholar, however, betrayed their fellows. This may have been Maria. We already know that Maria was of Cainhurt descent. Perhaps after the Hamlet Massacre, Maria was disillusioned enough to bring the impure Yharnam's blood back to her people. However it doesn't really seem to fit, as Maria is associated with

the early Healing Church. The Healing Church most assuredly fears the blood of Yharnam, and even labels her blood as forbidden as well. The Blood of Arianna's description reads: *"A member of the old Healing Church would know that her blood is similar indeed, to precisely what was once forbidden."* Arianna even wears a Cainhurst dress, furthering the connection between the two figures. Perhaps the scholar who brought the forbidden blood to Cainhurst was just an unnamed scholar, or perhaps it was Maria, or even the Bloody Crow. Either way, Yharnam's tainted blood made its way to Cainhurst Castle.

Queen Annalise imbibed in the tainted, Vermin-riddled forbidden blood of Yharnam, becoming first of the Vilebloods. But Annalise was not satisfied with the simple transformation that followed. She sought an Heir, a Child of Blood. Annalise believed that through the mass consumption of powerful blood she would be able to impregnate herself and give birth to the Child of Blood, and so she created the Vilebloods. The Cainhurst Attire says: *"This paper-thin silver armor is said to deflect blood of ill-intent, and is what allows the royal guards to capture prey for their beloved Queen, so that one day, she may bear a Child of Blood."* The Vilebloods set out into the night, seeking powerful beings to capture and drag back in chains to their Queen. Hunters would become the favored prey for the Vilebloods. The Blood Dreg, an item the PC Hunter can recover if they have the Corruption Rune equipped, tells us: *"The Vilebloods of Cainhurst, blood-lusting hunters, see these frightful things in coldblood. They often appear in the blood of echo fiends, that is to say, the blood of hunters. Queen Annalise partakes in these blood dreg offerings, so that she may one day bear the Child of Blood, the next Vileblood heir."* Look at the image of the Blood Dreg item. Look at the small... things that seem to squirm inside of it. They rather look like sperm, don't they?

Annalise believed that the consumption of the blood of powerful figures would allow her to eventually conceive a Child of Blood. Whatever a *Child of Blood* is, it would never come to pass. The Church discovered of this new threat and formed a response in the form of the Executioners, led by Logarius. The Wheel Hunter Badge tells us: *"Martyr Logarius led a band of Executioners, and this badge was crafted at their dedicated workshop. Their*

workshop was a secretive enclave of mystical beliefs and heady fanaticism which served as the backbone of the Executioners' unique brand of justice." Again we can see the reference to secrecy, describing the Church's early style of operating in darkness.

The Executioners stormed Castle Cainhurst and slaughtered the Vilebloods. The Nobles of Cainhurst were shown no mercy as Cainhurst fell to the invaders. But when Logarius marched into the Queen's throne room, he found that no matter what he did, she would not die. Perhaps simply imbibing Yharnam's blood had granted Annalise power beyond death, or perhaps it was the accumulation of Blood Dregs that had given her immortality. Either way, Logarius ruled that Queen Annalise would never be allowed freedom. If she could not be killed, she must be made prisoner for all eternity to prevent the birth of her Child of Blood. A mask was forced onto her, covering her entire face. There are no references or information available to be found on what exactly this mask is, other than looking at it as she wears it. However, whatever power the mask holds has bound her in her throne room and left her unable to resist her captivity. This still would not prevent outside sources from meeting with her and bringing her further Blood Dregs, as the PC Hunter is capable of doing, and so Logarius took the Crown of Cainhurst, the Crown of Illusions, and placed it atop his head.

"One of the precious secrets of Cainhurst. The old king's crown is said to reveal illusions, and expose a mirage that hides a secret. And so Logarius donned the crown of his own volition, determined to prevent a single soul from stumbling upon the vile secret. What visions did he see, sitting serenely upon his new throne?"

Only by wearing the Crown of Illusions would one be allowed access to Annalise's throne room. To prevent any further interaction with Annalise, Logarius donned the crown and sat upon the throne of Cainhurst, acting as a living lock for the prisoner Queen. Recall how Logarius' Wheel states that it had become: "*Bathed in pools of their blood, and forever steeped in their ire.*" Transforming the wheel reveals how tainted it has

become, as it contains the strength of the Vilebloods' within it. Logarius too had been so drenched in the impure blood that he had been forever steeped in the fury of the fallen Cainhurst Nobles. He became undying, a part of the bloody spirits of the fallen Vilebloods. He would remain as such until the PC Hunter would end his watch, taking the Crown of Illusions and discovering Annalise. But what path will the Player take? Will they kneel to the Queen and join her, bringing her Blood? Will they help Alfred in smashing her to pieces? Which path is the correct one to choose?

"Acts of goodness are not always wise, and acts of evil are not always foolish. but regardless. we shall always strive to be good." -Martyr Logarius

Chapter Seven: The Pthumerians, Arianna, Oedon, and Mergo

"In the age of the Great Ones, wedlock was a blood contract, only permitted to those slated to bear a special child."
-Ring of Betrothal

The Pthumerians existed long, long ago, long before the events of Bloodborne take place. And yet the echoes of what happened in old Pthumeru resonate very deeply in the current city of Yharnam, moreso than Yharnamites can possibly know.

For starters, I will use only information and evidence that can be found inside of the game. I will save my personal interpretations and beliefs for the end, so that you can make up your own mind about the evidence presented.

The Pthumerian Society existed long, long ago, centuries or even millennia ago. They were a people who were masters of ancient arcane arts, specifically relating to arts of Fire and arts of Blood. The Pthumerian People seemed to be Matriarchal, or at the very least the most important positions were often held by women. The hallways of the ancient Labyrinth echo with the Sinister Bells rung by the Bell Ringers. When we look at the description of a Sinister Root Chalice we are told: *"When used in a ritual, this sinister chalice summons the Sinister Resonant Bell. The bell-ringing woman appears to be a mad Pthumerian."* Aside from the Bell Ringers we have the Keepers, a group of eternal warriors who wander the Labyrinth caring for its denizens. The Bone Ash Armor states: *"The keepers, who mind the slumbering Great Ones, gained eternal life, preserved in ashen form in a ceremony of flame that cremated body and soul."* These women clearly held positions of importance, and we do know they are women despite their masks, as the voice clips they play during their combat and death animations are that of a female voice actress.

Finally, we have the Pthumerian Queen. Originally, the Pthumerian people had no ruler, they worked as simple

caretakers of the ancient Labyrinth. The Great Pthumeru Ihyll Chalice: *"While early Pthumerians were mere humble guardians of the slumbering Great Ones, their descendants felt entitled to name themselves a leader."* As Pthumerian society advanced, they grew into a more stable society with a Queen as their figurehead. The capital of Pthumeru, Ihyll, was named after one such Queen, possibly the first. However it is the last Queen of Pthumeru, Yharnam, who will be the focus of our analysis.

As for the men of Pthumerian Society, they seemed to provide more of a workforce and military for Pthumeru. The Hintertomb Chalice tells us: *Hintertombs are the peripheral catacombs of the old underground labyrinth. To this day, the Watchers continue to expand the hintertombs, unceremonious catacombs filled with graves and death.* Indeed, very often will the clanging sound of a pickaxe fill the Player's ear as the undead Pthumerians toil away to expand the Labyrinth further and further. They are overseen by the Watchers, fat and girthy men wielding cudgels, cleavers, burning irons and even shotguns.

There are also the Shadows of Yharnam; first encountered in the Forbidden Woods, the Shadows are presented to the player far before we know of the Queen's true name. The only two places the Shadows are found are in the Forbidden Woods and in the Nightmare of Mensis, both times in places very close to Queen Yharnam herself. Interestingly enough, if the PC Hunter wishes they can lure the Maneater Boars into the Shadows found in the Nightmare of Mensis. The Shadows will fight and kill the pigs, while some of them will die in the process. The Shadows do not appear to be aligned with the School of Mensis at all. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word *shadow* has many definitions, the most lesser used being **An inseparable attendant or companion.** It's a very clever use of ironic wordplay by From Software, to introduce the players first to the Shadows of Yharnam, leaving them to naturally associate the Shadows as being associated with the **City** Yharnam, as opposed to the **Queen.**

The Pthumerians were, as the Chalices imply, superhuman beings. They were close to the eldritch Truth, and achieved evolution and metamorphosis through the use of blood ministration, as evidenced by the fallen Pthumerian City Loran.

According to the Ailing Loran Chalice: *"The tragedy that struck this ailing land of Loran is said to have its root in the scourge of the beast."* When the PC Hunter travels to the ruins of Loran, they find a city that in many ways resembles Old Yharnam. It is a place ravaged by the Scourge of the Beast, as the vast majority of its inhabitants are either mindless beasts or mad Bell Ringers. There is even a Darkbeast, the mightiest of the beasts, that lurks on the lowest level of the fallen city, just as there is one that dwells in Old Yharnam. In Old Yharnam, the Scourge of the Beast was a result of the rampant blood ministration by the then newly-founded Healing Church in an attempt to cure the horrible disease ashen blood. The Lower Loran Chalice states: *"There are trace remains of medical procedures in parts of ailing Loran. Whether these were attempts to control the scourge of the beast, or the cause of the outbreak, is unknown."*

We can now put the pieces together and see that what the Player is currently experiencing in Yharnam once occurred a long, long, long time ago in ancient Pthumeru. Through the use of the Old Blood of the Great Ones, the Pthumerians were able to ascend and evolve, and yet with the tainted blood came the Scourge of the Beast, and possibly even what we would refer to in the modern era of Bloodborne as a Hunt, along with a Blood Moon. This brings us back to the Queen.

When the red moon hangs low, the line between man and beast is blurred. And when the Great Ones descend, a womb will be blessed with child. -Note found in the Byrgenwerth Mansion

The PC Hunter first encounters Queen Yharnam after the death of Rom, the Vacuous Spider. The most immediately horrifyingly apparent feature of the Queen is the blood staining her stomach. It's a sickening moment for the player, at least it was for me. She is found at the bottom of the Moonside Lake, having seemingly appeared out of nowhere, staring up at the sky and weeping. There, the PC Hunter sees the Blood Moon for the first time, and hears the cry of a newborn baby. In ancient Pthumeru, the Scourge of Beasts ravaged the land. It must have been then that the Blood Moon arose, perhaps for the very first time, and a womb was blessed with child. It's unknown if Yharnam was impregnated by the Great Ones specifically because she was

Queen, or if she was simply a woman chosen at random, but she is most assuredly assumed to have been, in that Hunt, the potential mother of a Great One. As we can see from the bloodstained rags around her stomach, the birth did not go well.

Let us now jump forwards hundreds of years back into present day Yharnam, and discuss Arianna. The PC Hunter encounters Arianna living in the Cathedral Ward of Yharnam; the Lady of the Night mistakes the Hunter for a potential customer and sends them away, telling them that she takes Hunts off. Once the PC Hunter has defeated Vicar Amelia they can convince Arianna to seek shelter in either Oedon Chapel or Iosefka's clinic. Sending her to the clinic will end all further interaction with her, while sending her to the Chapel will allow the PC to encounter and speak with her further.

Once Arianna and the PC Hunter become acquainted, she does what any good Yharnamite would do and offers her new friend a vial of her blood. If the Hunter accepts, they receive the item Blood of Arianna. It is with this item that we see the first inklings that Arianna may be much more than she first seems. *"Blood taken from Arianna, Cathedral Ward woman of pleasure. A member of the old Healing Church would know that her blood is similar indeed, to precisely what was once forbidden."* Why would Arianna have blood similar to something that was forbidden? After all, blood flows like water in Yharnam; anyone and everyone shares and imbibes in blood with one another. What makes Arianna's blood special? Let us, for a moment, take a look at what the PC Hunter encounters should they go to the very depths of the Pthumerian Labyrinth, to the very bottom of Pthumeru Ihyll. It is here that the Hunter fights against the weeping Yharnam, Queen of Pthumeru. But take a closer look at her as you fight her and notice that she seems bound, chained. There is cloth bound around her eyes, blinding her, and her wrists have been tightly chained together to keep her movement restricted. She is restrained for apparently good reason; during the fight with Yharnam she will free herself from her bondage and display a mastery over blood that can only possibly be defined as magic. She melts into blood, using it to travel distances; she uses blood to create false copies of herself, she sprays blood from her fingertips; she stabs herself through the wrists and chest

in order to summon blades of blood that swing through the air and impale the Hunter.

Returning back to Arianna, one only needs to take a brief look at her features to see the similarities between her and Queen Yharnam. Where do these similarities come from? From Cainhurst. Arianna's dress is the dress of a Cainhurst Noblewoman, one like Queen Annalise. Their flowing hair, long sweeping dress, and obvious beauty are all shared. The Noble Dress is found in a Cainhurst portrait room. There are many portraits of Nobles, and one of a tall, crowned woman in a grey dress, holding a blonde child... Perhaps Arianna is a descendant of the Queen Annalise, who had imbibed in Yharnam's forbidden blood, or if not royalty perhaps she simply has Cainhurst Blood in her genes. Either way, her blood is forbidden. If the PC Hunter has also rescued Adella the Nun in addition to Arianna, they may notice that, when talking to Arianna in the Oedon Chapel, if they angle their camera to the side they can notice that every time they speak to Arianna, Adella will rise from her seat to stare and watch the conversation. When the Hunter finishes speaking to Arianna, Adella will immediately look away and pretend as if she wasn't watching. It's a brilliantly subtle way to show that Adella has her eye on Arianna, and is possibly aware of the blasphemous nature of her blood.

But the similarities between Arianna and Queen Yharnam do not end with their clothing and facial structure. The fate that befell Queen Yharnam would, centuries later, befall Arianna.

Every Great One loses its child, and then yearns for a surrogate.

Queen Yharnam's childbirth did not go well. Judging from the massive amount of blood staining her stomach and the way she is found weeping in front of Mergo's Loft, we can only assume that the child did not survive the birthing process. When the Blood Moon rises over Yharnam, Arianna first starts to feel pain in her stomach. *"Oh... there's something wrong with me."* She will refuse to give the PC Hunter any more of her blood, and will have nothing to say until after the Hunter has slain Micolash in the Nightmare of Mensis. If the PC Hunter returns to the Cathedral

Ward they will find Arianna's chair empty, and a trail of Serum, clear blood, leading towards the Tomb of Oedon. Following the blood trail we find what is, in my opinion, the most disturbing scene in the entire game: A sobbing Arianna next to a squirming, wriggling Celestial Larva, covered in blood. The implications are... unpleasant. Arianna has gone completely mad, muttering, sobbing, and laughing. *"It can't be... this is a nightmare..."* The Larva will do nothing but squirm pathetically at her feet until the Hunter kills it. A single attack from any weapon will do the trick. Recovered from the dead creature is an Umbilical Cord: *"Every Great One loses its child, and then yearns for a surrogate, and Oedon, the Formless Great One, is no different. To think, it was corrupted blood that began this eldritch liaison."*

What follows is purely my own interpretation and belief based on the evidence I have gathered. Do not consider any of this as solid fact. Instead, use it as my interpretation, so that you can gather your own beliefs.

Centuries ago, the Pthumerian people discovered the Old Blood and the Great Ones, using the blood to elevate themselves beyond humanity. Their height grew, their strength was magnified, and they gained arcane control over fire and blood. However with the Old Blood comes the Scourge of the Beast. The Pthumerian city of Loran was the first to succumb to the Scourge, as an outbreak spread throughout the populous and the Pthumerians were infected by the scourge. And when the line between man and beast is blurred, the red moon will hang low; the Great Ones will descend, and a womb will be blessed with child. Queen Yharnam was impregnated, but every Great One loses its child.

But the Hunt will always begin again, and so it did. The red moon hung low and the line between beasts and men was blurred. And so the Great Ones descended, and a womb was blessed with child. The daughter of Queen Annalise, Arianna bore corrupted blood which began an eldritch liaison. But with whom?

This brings us to Oedon, the Formless One. The Formless Oedon rune states: *"The Great One Oedon, lacking form, exists only in voice, and is symbolized by this rune. Human or no, the oozing*

blood is a medium of the highest grade, and the essence of the formless Great One, Oedon. Both Oedon, and his inadvertent worshippers, surreptitiously seek the precious blood." Of all the Great Ones, Oedon is the one most similar to an Outer God of the Lovecraftian Mythos upon which Bloodborne is designed. Oedon is a being of such absurdly complex design that it would be impossible for From Software to even put him in their game, for describing his shape is something human beings simply can't do. Oedon is also the Great One most closely associated with the Blood, as both runes associated with him, Formless Oedon and Oedon Writhe, secrete a constant medium of blood, and provide the PC Hunter with ways of replenishing or storing the Quicksilver Bullets that are fused with their own Blood. While the Healing Church worships several Gods, it is likely that Oedon is very high in their pantheon, if not their Chief God. There is an entire chapel devoted to Oedon's worship, the Great One of Blood, around whom all of the Healing Church revolves.

Oedon, the Formless Great One, exists quite literally all around us. He is **literally** everywhere, without shape and only carrying a voice. In this sense, Oedon could also possibly be referred to as the **Cosmos itself**. Micolash makes this discovery in the Nightmare, when he is found communing with a Great One. He begins by confusing Oedon with Kos, believing he is speaking to the dead Great One of the ocean: *"Ahh, Kos, or some say Kosm... Do you hear our prayers?"* Halfways through the boss fight, Micolash has an epiphany. "*The cosmos, of course!"* It's not Kosm. It's **Cosmos**. The Choir would discover this truth as well, indeed their entire religion would be founded upon it as referenced by the Cosmic Eye Watcher Badge: *"Badge of a member of the Choir, elites of the Healing Church. The eye signifies the very cosmos. The Choir stumbled upon an epiphany, very suddenly and quite by accident. Here we stand, feet planted in the earth. but might the cosmos be very near us, only just above our heads?"* Oedon is so omnipresent that while he might not be God in the judeo-christian religious sense it is mostly certainly God-**like**. This would lead the Choir's mantra, their epiphany: *"The Sky and the Cosmos are one."* The early Healing Church had believed that the Great Ones were associated with the water, as this had been where Kos was found. The Choir however concluded that it was not the sea that linked them to the Great Ones, but the very

Cosmos itself, Oedon. It was Oedon who impregnated Queen Yharnam, and it was Oedon who impregnated Arianna.

The vast majority of players will first encounter the crying of a baby when they are first presented with the Blood Moon after the death of Rom, the Vacuous Spider. It is at this point that the line between the Waking World and the Nightmare begins to blur. The Blood Moon hangs low, the Amygdala become visible, and the constant crying of a baby will begin to follow and haunt the PC Hunter as they struggle to understand what is happening.

Many players know that it is possible to see the Amygdala before the Blood Moon rises if they have at least 40 insight, but did you know it's also possible to hear the crying baby before the death of Rom as well? I discovered this on my NG++ playthrough, in which I decided to start with 99 insight and see if anything happened differently. What I discovered is that if the PC Hunter has an insight above 60 they can hear the crying baby, even before the Blood Moon has risen. This would seem to imply that the baby exists far before the Mensis Ritual takes place

Every Great One loses its child and Mergo, Queen Yharnam's child with a Great One, was lost as well. When we encounter Queen Yharnam in the Dreamlands, it looks almost as if her stomach has been ripped open, a child torn from her womb. But when we encounter her in the bottom of the Pthumerian Labyrinth, she is noticeably still swollen with child. Upon her death, she drops the Yharnam Stone. In it we see the outline of a fetus.

Roughly one percent of pregnancies are ectopic, a complication in pregnancy meaning that the fetus begins to develops outside of the uterus. Of ectopic pregnancies, one percent of them are abdominal, in which case the fetus develops in the abdomen of the mother as opposed to the womb. When one of these pregnancies fails and the fetus dies, it begins to slowly calcify and harden. The fetus can remain in the mother for years. In many cases, the fetus remained calcified and hardened inside of the mother for decades after its death. These fetuses are called Lithopedions, or “Stone Babies”. This is what the Yharnam Stone is, the calcified corpse of an unborn Great One: Mergo.

Stillborn, the only thing that would be salvaged from Mergo would be his Umbilical Cord. Found from the defeated boss fight Mergo's Wet Nurse, the cord reads: *"A great relic, also known as the Cord of the Eye. Every infant Great One has this precursor to the umbilical cord. Every Great One loses its child, and then yearns for a surrogate. This Cord granted Mensis audience with Mergo, but resulted in the stillbirth of their brains."* Micolash had seen both the success of Master Willem and the failure of Laurence. He had seen that in order to ascend, one must use a Cord of the Eye, the umbilical cord of a Great One. When the School of Mensis attempted to use Mergo's Umbilical Cord to commune with Mergo himself, the ritual was an enormous and terrible failure. It's unclear exactly what it means for a Great One to be *lost*, or even to be *dead*. They exist on a plane of existence so far above our own. Recall that even though something may die in the Waking World, its consciousness may live on in the Nightmare.

Mergo lived on in the Nightmare, possibly attached in part to the Wet Nurse, or possibly manifested as the Wet Nurse itself. It is likely that the School of Mensis made a connection with Mergo by using his Umbilical Cord. But what they found was an eldritch concept of death so inconceivable that it resulted in the obliteration of their minds.

"Beware, secrets are secrets for a reason. And some do not wish to see them uncovered. Especially when the secrets are particularly unseemly..." -Simon the Harrowed

Chapter Eight: Micolash, the Blood Moon, the Dreamlands, and the Great Ones

"A hunter is a hunter, even in a dream. But, alas, not too fast!
The nightmare swirls and churns unending!"
-Micolash, Host of the Nightmare

If there's anyone in Bloodborne that we can safely ascribe the quality of 'bad guy' to, it's probably Micolash. The Great Ones are too complex and too alien in their existence to ascribe moral values of 'good' or 'bad' to them; Willem very likely tried his hardest to prevent the events of Bloodborne from occurring in the first place; the Beasts are no longer thinking creatures; Yharnam is portrayed as being a tragic figure the victim of circumstances beyond her control; Annalise defied the Church and tried to steer her people into a new age of prosperity; Laurence and Gehrman's tried to control the Scourge; Ludwig tried to establish an organization that would protect the innocent; Eileen only kills Hunters who have succumbed to bloodlust; the Abhorrent Beast can't help the fact that he's been so horribly afflicted with the Scourge and his dialogue is almost heart-wrenching as you see how terrible his condition is; Maria genuinely cared for the patients of the Research Hall and was wracked with guilt at her actions in the Hamlet; Patches is mischievous but amicable; the False Iosefka is desperately trying to finish research which she believes will uplift and save humanity; Alfred simply wants to let Logarius rest in peace; Djura just wants to protect Old Yharnam; Gascoigne is slaying what he believes are monsters. Micolash on the other hand is batshit crazy, and he seems to be perfectly happy with that fact.

Micolash's existence seems to be, in itself, a laugh at the player by the developers. We've journeyed so far, faced so much, and struggled so painfully in our search for answers. When we finally encounter someone who could explain to us what the hell is going on, he's stark-raving mad. It's almost as if the developers are taunting us: "You're sure you want the answers? He knows the truth; look what good it did him." But before we get to Micolash's status as being Host of the Nightmare and the implications that

holds, let's go back the beginning and take a look at Micolash and his School of Mensis.

For starters, I will use only information and evidence that can be found inside of the game. I will save my personal interpretations and beliefs for the end, so that you can make up your own mind about the evidence presented.

Everything started at Byrgenwerth. A group of Scholars discovered existence of the Great Ones and the incredible power of the Old Blood. This would lead to an inevitable separation as differences in ideology led to a group of the Byrgenwerth Scholars leaving the Academy to found the Healing Church. Micolash was one such scholar. In our fight against him we see Micolash wearing the tattered uniform of a Byrgenwerth Scholar. The description of the Student's Uniform reads: *"Uniform of the students of Byrgenwerth, a bygone institute of learning. The Healing Church has its roots in Byrgenwerth, and naturally borrows heavily from its uniform design. The focus not on knowledge, or thought, but on pure pretension would surely bring Master Willem to despair, if only he knew."*

In the early days of the Healing Church the group operated mostly in secret. Gehrman's Workshop would serve as a secret police force for the Church, while Micolash would found the School of Mensis, a new institution of learning for the Church to continue the research at Byrgenwerth. According to the Upper Cathedral Key: "*The upper echelons of the Healing Church are formed by the School of Mensis, based in the Unseen Village, and the Choir occupying the Upper Cathedral Ward."* This key is found in Yahar'gul on the corpse of an imprisoned Choir member. From their new, secret location in Yahar'gul, Micolash's new School of Mensis would be protected and hidden by the Healing Church. The Yahar'gul attire tells us: *"The hunters of Yahar'gul answer to the village's founders, the School of Mensis. Hunters in name only, these kidnappers blend into the night wearing this attire."* From their hidden conclave, servants of the School of Mensis would skulk out into the night and kidnap innocents to drag them back to Yahar'gul for their experiments. The PC Hunter can be one such kidnapped victim if they die to a Kidnapper, an enemy that first make their appearance after the death of the

Bloodstarved Beast. The Hunter also encounters and fights two Yahar'gul hunters lurking outside of a home in the Cathedral Ward, possibly searching for more victims. It would seem, however, that the School of Mensis slowly drifted apart from the Healing Church. While Yharnamites venerate the Old Blood and pay homage to the Great Ones as being god-like figures, the citizens of Yahar'gul worship the Great Ones directly. Statues of the twisted figures line the streets and enormous Chapels are devoted to the worship of spider-like Great Ones.

Furthermore, the rituals of the School of Mensis seem to be either directly or indirectly responsible for the coming of the Blood Moon. But what is the Blood Moon?

Madmen toil surreptitiously in rituals to beckon the moon. Uncover their secrets. -Note left by a dead Hunter.

The Mensis ritual must be stopped, lest we all become beasts. -Note left by a dead Hunter.

When the red moon hangs low, the line between man and beast is blurred. -Note found in Byrgenwerth Mansion.

The red moon hangs low, and beasts rule the streets. -Note left by Djura.

Behold! A Paleblood sky! -Unknown author.

The Player first encounters the Blood Moon after the death of Rom, the Vacuous Spider. The PC Hunter discovers Queen Yharnam at the bottom of the Moonside Lake, seemingly having appeared from nowhere. She weeps as she stares at the sky, and as the Hunter follows her gaze they see the overwhelming Blood Moon looming above them. After that, everything changes. This is the moment when Bloodborne goes from being a tale of Beasts and Blood to a tale of horrible, eldritch things that work behind the scenes. Or perhaps a better way to explain it would be that it was **always** a story of eldritch things, only **we couldn't see them.** Many players walk out of Oedon Chapel for the first time to the sound of a loud, hissing vacuum-like noise coming from behind them. They turn and stare at the peculiar wisp of air that

seems to flow through the air. Some of them, as I did, walk closer to learn more. It is then that the Hunter is hoisted into the air by unseen forces, crushed to death and succumbing to Frenzy. If you're like me, you moved on with the hunt. You chalked it up to just another bullshit Miyazaki deathtrap. What killed you was an Amygdala, or at least what I will refer to as an Amygdala. It's not clear if the Amygdala that serves as the boss of the Nightmare Frontier is the Great One's **name** or is its **species.** However the Amygdalan Arm labels it as an *"arm of a small Amygdala Great One",* and the term *Great One* is too broad, and so I refer to these creatures as the Amygdalae. Once the Hunter slays Rom and the Blood Moon rises, the Amygdalae are no longer hidden; in fact it becomes painfully clear that they've **been there all along.**

And this brings us to The Dreamlands.

Many players, indeed I would say the majority of players, are naturally confused by the words *Nightmare* and *Dream* that repeat in Bloodborne. Most people haven't read the works of Lovecraft, from which the Bloodborne series takes its influence; even those who have read Lovecraft typically only read his later (and admittedly much better written) works such as Shadow over Innsmouth and the Call of Cthulhu. However towards the middle of Lovecraft's career we have what Lovecraft Scholars refer to as *The Dream Cycle*.

For Lovecraft, the act of dreaming was a method in which human beings could briefly transport their consciousness to an alternate dimension. The Dreamlands are **not** an illusion, they are a real place. The Dreamlands are a location just like Yharnam, Byrgenwerth, Cainhurst, or Yahar'gul. The mere fact that the player can take items from The Dreamlands and bring them back to the Waking World is proof that it's a place equally real. The Lead Elixir's description states: *"Its recipe for this mysterious concoction is unknown, but some postulate that it materializes only within the most desperate nightmare."*

There are four distinctly different locations in the Dreamlands that the PC Hunter travels to: The Nightmare Frontier, the Lecture Hall, the Hunter's Nightmare, and the Hunter's Dream. The Hunter's Dream is the first place in the Dreamlands the Hunter travels to, and from here it is where they will travel to different

parts of the game's world. The Lecture Hall is the next location the Hunter travels to. The Lecture Hall of Byrgenwerth has been somehow warped and transported into the Dreamlands. The Lecture Hall is connected to the Nightmare, which consists of both the Nightmare of Mensis and the Nightmare Frontier, and judging from the fact that a Church Giant is found in the upper levels it's possible that the School of Mensis moved into the Nightmare Lecture Hall at some point in time. Notice that when the Hunter opens certain doors in The Lecture Hall and transports to The Nightmare, the same warping effects and particles occur as when the Hunter uses a lamp. The Dreamlands are a location that exists parallel to our own world. They have a landscape just like we do, only they play by slightly different rules. Teleportation is just another method of transportation in the Dreamlands. The Dreamlands exist directly parallel to our own Waking World. While the Waking World is the domain of humanity, the Dreamlands are the lands of the Great Ones. These two worlds exist like a reflection of one another.

The Nightmare Frontier appears to be a reflection of the ravaged Pthumerian land of Loran, as evidenced by the fact that Silverbeasts wander the Frontier and that Amygdala drops the Ailing Loran Chalice. The Hunter's Nightmare appears to be a reflection of the city of Yharnam itself. The Hunter's Dream is obviously Gehrman's abandoned Workshop. They are places so very similar to their locations in the Waking World, only slightly different.

Consider staring into the mirror, watching your reflection. You stare at it for an hour and, for the very briefest of moments, you see a figure standing behind you in your reflection. Whipping your head behind you, startled, you see that nothing is there. Looking back at your reflection, the figure is gone. What you've just seen is a tiny little rip in the veil that separates the two worlds, the Waking World and the Dreamlands. The figure is, of course, still standing behind you. It exists on a plane of reality parallel to your own, above yours. Maybe the figure was curious about you, wanted to learn more, and in showing interest made itself visible for just the slightest of moments.

"Behold! A Paleblood sky!" This message can be found prior to Rom's death, rather confusingly. If we look up at the sky, nothing is out of the ordinary. The message is still there, however, after Rom's death. Looking at the sky reveals the Blood Moon in all its splendor. Of course the message was there before, because the Blood Moon was always there, **we just couldn't see it.**

This is what insight allows us to do. With forty insight the Hunter will be able to see the Amygdalae in the Cathedral Ward even before the death of Rom. With fifty insight, the theme music of the Hunter's Dream will change to the theme that plays in the Hunter's Dream after Rom's death even before Rom's death. With sixty insight the Hunter will be able to hear the crying baby when standing next to Arianna, even before the death of Rom. There is a theme here. Insight allows us to glimpse into the realm parallel to our own and see what lies beyond humanity's perception. After the death of Rom, the veil that separates the worlds collapses completely. Insight is no longer necessary; the Blood Moon rises; the Amygdalae are visible; the crying baby is heard constantly. The citizens of Yharnam are driven insane once they are forcibly made to understand the depths of their reality. Simply looking upon the Great Ones is enough to drive someone insane, let alone the twisted knowledge that they lurked above you all your life, always watching you. But where does it fit together? How does Micolash beckon the Blood Moon? Why is he in the Nightmare? Why is he the Host?

What follows is purely my own interpretation and belief based on the evidence I have gathered. Do not consider any of this as solid fact. Instead, use it as my interpretation, so that you can gather your own beliefs.

The School of Mensis was founded to continue the study of the Great Ones began at Byrgenwerth. Micolash reported to Laurence and the Healing Church and in return they kept the existence of the School a secret. After the purge of Old Yharnam, secrecy was no longer necessary and the Choir was formed to study the Old Blood of the Great Ones and Ebrietas. Early on, Micolash and the Choir co-operated, as evidenced by the Augur of Ebrietas that Micolash wields. However Micolash's experiments and the rituals of the School of Mensis slowly grew more twisted. Micolash

began to kidnap Hunters, likely to Ludwig's displeasure. Even the corpse of a Choir member is found chained and imprisoned inside of Yahar'gul, suggesting that Micolash and the Mensis students were growing emboldened by their closing nearer to the Eldritch Truth. In response to this the Choir would send a man named Edgar to infiltrate the School of Mensis and discover what was going on, implying that the school had begun hiding their research from the Choir. We know very little about Edgar; he is found in the Nightmare of Mensis and wears a Student Uniform, wielding a Holy Blade and Rosmarinus. The Official Guide simply names him as *Edgar, Choir Intelligence*. Edgar traveled into the School of Mensis to find that the students now worshiped the Great Ones as literal gods, the Amygdalae in particular.

The motivations of the Amygdalae are unknown. It's clear that the godlike beings could likely send Yharnam toppling to the ground if they wished. The weapons of mortals pale in comparison to the Great Ones. It's odd really, how they seem so idle and passive as they watch the humans walk by, sometimes reaching down in curiosity to grasp at one. Amygdalae only appear in places of worship. One is found wrapped around the Oedon Chapel, another in the abandoned Church that served as a gateway to Yahar'gul. The Amygdala the player fights is located in what appears to be a large cathedral, where the ancient Pthumerians likely worshiped the Great Ones. Consider the Moon rune's description: *"A transcription of "moon," as spoken by the Great Ones inhabiting the nightmare. The Great Ones that inhabit the nightmare are sympathetic in spirit, and often answer when called upon."* Perhaps that explains why the Amygdalae which live in the Nightmare congregate around places of worship. Maybe they listen to the hopes and prayers of human beings. In Yahar'gul however, the Amygdalae are **everywhere.**

As Micolash and the School of Mensis grew closer to the eldritch Truth, they attracted more and more of the Great Ones, like a flame attracting moths. Their final ritual, however, would be their undoing. Somehow Micolash came into possession of one of the Umbilical Cords of the Great Ones. Mergo's Umbilical Cord, to be specific. Here was all the evidence they needed, the Cord of a true Great One: Mergo, child of Yharnam and Oedon. With the results of their research and the Cord of the Eye at their disposal,

Micolash and the Mensis students would attempt to ascend to the status of godhood just as Rom and Willem had done with the Orphan's cord. Micolash would line his brain with eyes. The Cord's description: *"Every Great One loses its child, and then yearns for a surrogate. This Cord granted Mensis audience with Mergo, but resulted in the stillbirth of their brains."* Mergo was dead. Indeed, Mergo had died in stillbirth millennia ago in ancient Pthumeru. It's not exactly clear what it would mean for a Great One to be *dead*, if they can even die in the first place. When the School of Mensis communed with the dead Great One, it was the end of Yahar'gul. The veil between worlds was ripped apart; Bell Ringers brought the dead to life; the citizens fleeing the carnage were frozen in stone, permanently affixed to the walls they so desperately tried to climb to freedom. The many caskets that lined the streets burst open, body parts coagulating together into masses of meat and bone that clung together and attacked the Kidnappers, murdering them.

Mensis was dragged into the Nightmare, ripped open. Micolash and all of his students were dead, but their consciousnesses were pulled down into the Nightmare. Very few would survive this transition, the only two we know of being Micolash and Edgar. Micolash was brought to the Dreamlands, specifically the Nightmare. Edgar likely survived due to the fact that he was not wearing a Mensis Cage and likely did not participate in the ritual, while Micolash is a bit of a special case. Micolash's corpse, still located in Yahar'gul, provided a gateway. Just as the many lamps around Yharnam provide gates to the Hunter's Dream, Micolash's corpse, the Host of the Nightmare, would provide a gateway to the Nightmare. The Nightmare, as we have discussed, appears to be a reflection of the Pthumerian City Loran. If that is the case, perhaps Loran was the place of Mergo's attempted birth. At the top of Mergo's Loft, the castle upon which the Hunter ascends, we find Queen Yharnam weeping. By following her gaze, we ascend to the top of the castle and there we fight Mergo's Wet Nurse. Historically, a Wet Nurse was typically a woman who would breastfeed an infant child if the mother, for whatever reason, was unable to. While fighting her, the Lullaby of Mergo, a haunting melody, plays throughout the area. Perhaps the Wet Nurse was a Great One summoned by Yharnam to care for her future child, or perhaps the Wet Nurse was created as some kind of manifestation of Mergo's consciousness. Either way, the Wet

Nurse is a fully formed Great One. She bleeds red just as the Amygdalae, the Orphan, and the Moon Presence do, instead of the clear fluid that the Kin bleed. She is the dominant force ruling over the Nightmare from atop Mergo's Loft, and something peculiar occurs upon slaying her. In the English version of Bloodborne, the blue text **PREY SLAUGHTERED** accompanies a victorious boss fight. In the Japanese version, it's the blue text **YOU HUNTED**. But in both versions, killing Mergo's Wet Nurse causes the red text **NIGHTMARE SLAIN** to appear on the screen. I was rather confused when I had first seen this. Consider Bloodborne's tagline: Hunt your Nightmares. Let's pause for a moment and look at the four fully-fledged Great Ones that the Hunter encounters: The Wet Nurse, Amygdala, the Orphan, and the Moon Presence. Of the four, Amygdala is the only one who does not grant the **NIGHTMARE SLAIN** message. The Wet Nurse, the Orphan, and the Moon Presence are the only three enemies in the game who make that message appear on screen.

This puzzled me for a very, very long time until I came to a rather simple conclusion: Amygdala isn't dead. Even after killing the one in the Nightmare Frontier, the other Amygdalae still remain. The Hunter even kills another Amygdala in the Pthumerian Labyrinth. Perhaps the Amygdalae aren't individual members of a single species after all, but **a single Great One.** After all, Patches speaks to the Amygdala that grabs you in the Cathedral Ward as if it is Amygdala itself. I only had this revelation after refighting Mergo's Wet Nurse in NG+ and realizing that she appears to create a perfect clone of herself, using it to fight me. The Great Ones exist on a level far beyond our comprehension, who is to say they can't be in multiple places at once? In the depths of Great Isz the Hunter even fights Ebrietas for a second time, who appears to have been there all along. Whatever the mystery behind the Nightmare Slain message, slaying the Wet Nurse ends Mergo's consciousness and puts the Mensis Rituals to an end.

However the ritual had not been an **entire** failure. The ascension had worked, more or less. A new Great One was born from the stillbirthed minds of the Mensis Students: the Brain of Mensis. The Living String tells us: *"The immense brain that Mensis retrieved from the nightmare was indeed lined with eyes on the inside, but they were of an evil sort, and the brain itself was terrible rotten. But even still, it was a legitimate Great One, and*

left a relic. A living relic, at that, which is a precious thing indeed." The Brain of Mensis is a helpless Great One whose only real strength is the madness it causes by looking upon it. The Brain of Mensis is suspended in Mergo's Loft, acting as a living weapon that attacks oncomers. If the Hunter finds their way down to a lever accessible by fighting past the Winter Lanterns, they can release the chains on the Brain of Mensis and send it hurtling into the abyss. Working back down to the base of Mergo's Loft they will find a new elevator which brings them down to the fallen, helpless Great One.

It was kind of sad, really. When I first encountered the Brain of Mensis, twitching there, a mass of brain and eyes that watched me walking back and forth, I wasn't really sure what to do with it. Should I kill it? It certainly wasn't aggressive, it was simply lying there and clearly had no way of fighting back. I decided to do what had become a bit of a habit for me whenever I encountered something having to do with the Great Ones: I put on the Mensis Cage and performed the Make Contact gesture. The Mensis Cage is described as: *"This hexagonal iron cage suggests their strange ways. The cage is a device that restrains the will of the self, allowing one to see the profane world for what it is.It also serves as an antenna that facilitates contact with the Great Ones of the dream.But to an observer, the iron cage appears to be precisely what delivered them to their harrowing nightmare."*

I had learned early that the Doll would respond to gestures, leading me to believe there were others that would as well. Just like everyone else, I was hoping to find some kind of secret somewhere. So far, I had been thoroughly unsuccessful. No matter where I wore the Mensis Cage or to whom I performed Make Contact, nothing had happened. So I sat there, like an idiot I told myself, as my Hunter stood in front of the Brain of Mensis with his arms outstretched. I knew from experience that eventually the Hunter would change positions, and I had taken to waiting for that moment before moving on with whatever I was doing. To my complete and utter surprise, an item appeared in my inventory. It was a Moon Rune, the most powerful one I had encountered. *"The Great Ones that inhabit the nightmare are sympathetic in spirit, and often answer when called upon."* It was a moment that legitimately made me feel bad about this **thing** in front of me. I decided to kill it. Maybe the fact that it gave me a

Moon Rune, a Rune that grants more Blood Echoes upon killing enemies, was some kind of cry for an end to its misery. I was rewarded with the Living String, an item I had been looking for idly for quite some time as it was needed to access Pthumeru Ihyll.

Later I would read online that the Mensis Cage was unnecessary, and one simply had to perform Make Contact. To my surprise I would read that nobody had discovered any use for the Mensis Cage whatsoever. Nothing? Really? Not a single secret unlocked with such an item that seems so **obviously** placed to unlock a secret? Maybe the Cage doesn't do anything at all. Maybe, in their madness, the delusions of the Mensis Students convinced them it worked even though it wasn't necessary. Their madness, after all, would deliver them to their harrowing nightmare.

"Grant us eyes, grant us eyes. Plant eyes on our brains, to cleanse our beastly idiocy." -Micolash, Host of the Nightmare

Chapter Nine: Laurence, Gehrman, and The Hunter's Mark

"Seek the old blood. Let us pray... let us wish... to partake in communion. Let us partake in communion... and feast upon the old blood. Our thirst for blood satiates us, soothes our fears. Seek the old blood... but beware the frailty of men. Their wills are weak, minds young. The foul beasts will dangle nectar and lure the meek into the depths. Remain wary of the frailty of men. Their wills are weak, minds young. Were it not for fear, death would go unlamented."

-Vicar Amelia

Laurence and Gehrman. Together, they would change the world. Who were they originally, and how did they fall from grace? What happened to Laurence, and how was Gehrman bound to the Hunter's Dream? When we see now, what their organization has become, we can only wonder what these two individuals dreamed of. Did they want a better world? Did they want personal power? Perhaps they were simply madmen, chasing after scientific curiosity and slaughtering the innocent in their path. In this penultimate chapter we will examine the fates of these two individuals, and the consequences of their actions.

For starters, I will use only information and evidence that can be found inside of the game. I will save my personal interpretations and beliefs for the end, so that you can make up your own mind about the evidence presented.

The PC Hunter awakens into a world of horror, just as the player does. They have no answers, they have no real questions to even ask. The world is confusing, frightening, and punishing. Indeed if the Hunter had been alone, they likely never would have gotten much of anywhere. But the Hunter isn't alone.

"Ah-hah, you must be the new hunter. Welcome to the Hunter's Dream. This will be your home, for now. I am... Gehrman, friend to you hunters. You're sure to be in a fine haze about now, but don't think too hard about all of this. Just go out and kill a few

beasts. It's for your own good. You know, it's just what hunters do! You'll get used to it..." -Gehrman, the First Hunter

Gehrman provides the Hunter with a home and a workshop. From within the Hunter's Dream, Gehrman will provide the Hunter with a bit of comfort and a small amount of guidance. But who is Gehrman? Where does he come from and why is he here? According to the Plain Doll: *"He was a hunter long, long ago, but now serves only to advise them. He is obscure, unseen in the dreaming world. Still, he stays here, in this dream."*

Gehrman was the First Hunter, and from him all modern hunting techniques were developed. A central theme of Gehrman is mercy, what he grants to those he kills in the Hunter's Dream, as implied by his Burial Blade:

"Trick weapon wielded by Gehrman, the First Hunter. A masterpiece that defined the entire array of weapons crafted at the workshop. Its blade is forged with siderite, said to have fallen from the heavens. Gehrman surely saw the hunt as a dirge of farewell, wishing only that his prey might rest in peace, never again to awaken to another harrowing nightmare."
He also created the Plain Doll, basing its appearance upon his dead student Maria. From within the Hunter's Dream, Gehrman and the Doll guide the Paleblood Hunters in their work. Gehrman was also, as we know, an acquaintance of Laurence.

"Oh, Laurence... what's taking you so long... I've grown too old for this, of little use now, I'm afraid..."

Our first encounter with Laurence comes from discovering his skull in the Grand Cathedral, after defeating Vicar Amelia. here we witness a memory in which Laurence announced to Master Willem that he was leaving the college. We learn from Laurence's Skull, found in the Nightmare, that it is the: *"Skull of Laurence, first vicar of the Healing Church. In reality he became the first cleric beast, and his human skull only exists within the Nightmare. The skull is a symbol of Laurence's past, and what he failed to protect. He is destined to seek his skull, but even if he found it, it could never restore his memories."* The human skull appears to be a purely symbolic object, created in the Nightmare, as Laurence's skull in the Waking World is found in the Grand

Cathedral. In Miyazaki's interview with FuturePress he remarks that *"[Laurence's] skull served as the start of the Healing Church itself, but it's taken the form of a twisted beast."*

Laurence was therefore the founder of the Healing Church, having left Byrgenwerth after a disagreement in philosophy with Master Willem. Laurence and Gehrman represent two halves of a mystery. What happened to them? How did things become the way they are when we enter the game?

What follows is purely my own interpretation and belief based on the evidence I have gathered. Do not consider any of this as solid fact. Instead, use it as my interpretation, so that you can gather your own beliefs.

Laurence was the First Vicar; Gehrman was the First Hunter. Their story, like much in Bloodborne, begins at Byrgenwerth. We have already established that Gehrman was an associate of both Laurence and Master Willem. Gehrman may have been a student at Byrgenwerth, or judging by his combat proficiency and craftsmanship may have been the academy's handyman, groundskeeper, or a bodyguard. But upon the discovery of the Old Blood, Laurence would lead a section of the Byrgenwerth Scholars in forming the Healing Church, separating from Byrgenwerth. Gehrman, Laurence's closest friend, would join him. Laurence and Gehrman believed that humanity could achieve its next evolution through the use of the Old Blood, as written in the Metamorphosis Rune: *"The discovery of blood made their dream of evolution a reality. Metamorphosis, and the excesses and deviation that followed, was only the beginning."* It was, however, at this time that Laurence and Gehrman came to a horrible discovery. While the Old Blood could indeed cure any disease, those who had been ministered were susceptible to falling under a new, terrible illness known only as the Scourge of the Beast. Those who had succumbed to the tainted blood suffered from a form of Lycanthropy. Their hair elongated, their teeth sharpened, their size and strength increased, and they became violent and irrational. The men and women who had succumbed to the Scourge became Beasts. But Laurence could not stop his research. Sacrifices would need to be made. All who followed Willem's footsteps knew that evolution required courage. A note found in the Nightmare Lecture Hall reads: *"Master Willem was right.*

Evolution without courage will be the ruin of our race." And so Laurence's work would continue.

While Laurence formed the Church, Gehrman formed the Workshop. A secret institution, the Workshop would train a group of individuals to hunt and slaughter Beasts. The Hunter attire tells us it is: *"A fine piece of hunter attire that provides stable defense to anyone facing Yharnam's beastly threat. Allows one to stalk beasts unannounced, by cover of night."* The Workshop acted as a secret cleanup crew for Laurence's budding church. They would hunt down those who had turned and execute them before panic could spread throughout Yharnam.

It's possible that Laurence and Gehrman, knowledgeable of the Great Ones that they were, also discovered the terrible nature of the Blood Moon, and the source of the Scourge as being the Paleblooded Moon Presence. They tried to find a way to defeat the Moon Presence, an antibody that would be too strong for it, some way to control the Scourge of the Beast. They were unsuccessful. Laurence and Gehrman grew older, the Workshop was sealed away and Gehrman became prisoner of the Moon Presence. In his attempt to free his closest friend, Laurence pushed his research to the limits. The Scourge had to be contained, no matter the cost.

Ashen Blood was introduced to Old Yharnam, and the research intensified. The beasts were studied by Laurence and his Church, even while corpses piled in the streets and the city was covered in blood. Laurence's countless experiments resulted in a breakthrough, the culmination of all of his research to put an end to the Scourge of the Beast, and control it for good: The Beast's Embrace.

"After the repeated experiments in controlling the scourge of beasts, the gentle "Embrace" rune was discovered. When its implementation failed, the "Embrace" became a forbidden rune, but its knowledge became a foundation of the Healing Church."

In the Grand Cathedral of the Healing Church, the First Vicar committed the Embrace to memory, the Oath Rune burned into his mind. With this he would take control over the Scourge, put an end to the Hunts, master the Old Blood, guide humanity to the

next stage of human evolution, and free his best friend from the control of the Great Ones. This is what everything had been for. All the dead victims, all the unspeakable crimes, leaving Byrgenwerth, exploring the Labyrinth, founding the Healing Church; everything in his life had been for this. Everything lead to this one moment; for this, it would be all worth it. But it was not to be.

"*The skull is a symbol of Laurence's past, and what he failed to protect.*"

On that day, the Healing Church changed forever. Laurence became the first Cleric Beast, a creature the likes of which the Healing Church had never encountered. This was not simply a person who had grown fangs and hair, this was a true monster. It's possible that it was the Church Assassin Brador who found Laurence first. Brador's Testimony, the scalp of a Cleric Beast, tells us: "*The scalp of a horrid Cleric Beast, indicating that hunter Brador, a Healing Church assassin, had killed a compatriot. Afterward, he wore his ally's own scalp, and hid himself away, deep below in a cell. The Church provided him with a single, soundless bell of death to ensure their secrets would be kept.*" Brador slew Laurence, and in doing so was driven mad. He skinned the corpse, splattered his clothes with the blood of the fallen Vicar, severed the head from the body, and scalped it. When he was found, he was drenched with blood and gore, and his Bloodletter was steeped in Frenzy.

"Nothing changes, such is the nature of man..." -Brador

Brador and his Testimony to the failure of the Healing Church were locked away. Any and all research into controlling the Scourge of the Beast was immediately stopped, and deemed forbidden. The Clawmark and Beast Runes, along with the Beast Blood Pellets, were all black marked by the Healing Church. With Laurence's death, the Church had formed one of the pillars of its philosophy: Beware the frailty of men. The Scourge cannot be controlled; it must be destroyed.

As for Laurence, his consciousness was pulled into the Nightmare. Perhaps he was cursed to burn for all eternity, as punishment for the flames that covered Old Yharnam, a brilliant mind lost to madness.

And so now we have the first half of our picture. But what of Gehrman?

While Gehrman hadn't been affected as deeply by the events of the Hamlet Massacre as Maria had been, it had still disturbed him. He too was subject to the curse of the Kos Parasites, and had terrible dreams because of it. Upon defeating the Orphan, the Doll notes that Gehrman is sleeping strangely soundly, for he normally has difficulty sleeping. Even so, Gehrman aided Laurence in the founding of the Healing Church and established the Workshop, training the First Hunters in the art of slaying beasts. But while Gehrman hadn't been as distraught by the Hamlet Massacre, the death of Maria destroyed him.

According to Maria's hunter garb, Gehrman had a "curious mania" in regards to her that she was unaware of. Maria greatly admired Gehrman, but it's unclear if the Master and Student shared a romantic relationship or whether Gehrman's affection for her was purely one-sided. Whatever the case, her death ruined him. After defeating Maria in the Astral Clocktower, we find her coffin placed directly behind her chair. Resting atop the coffin lid are coldblood flowers, the same as the ones found in Gehrman's garden in the Hunter's Dream. Spiraling into depression after the death of his greatest pupil, Gehrman sealed his Workshop away and withdrew from the world into his isolation.

In his growing madness, Gehrman made a doll. The master craftsman that he was, the doll was made with exquisite perfection. The Small Hair Ornament tells us: *"Although it has been lost for quite some time, one can still see signs of the care with which this tasteful ornament was once kept."* This indicates that Gehrman held onto his only memento of Maria, treasuring it designing his doll off of her. Terribly lonely and terribly miserable, he wanted nothing more than to have Maria back. It was then that something took notice of poor Gehrman's mania, for as the Moon Rune reminds us: the Great Ones are sympathetic in spirit.

To have his beloved Maria back, he would give anything. So it was that Gehrman was bound to the dream, and the Hunter's Mark branded in his mind.

"Dangling, upside-down rune etched in one's mind. Symbol of a hunter." -Hunter's Mark

What is the Hunter's Mark? In terms of gameplay significance it functions as the Nexial Binding from Demon's Souls or the Darksign from Dark Souls. But... what is it really? Its description calls it a rune, but we do not commit it to memory like we do the Carryl Runes. Runes are, as we know, utterings of the Great Ones etched into symbols. Runesmith Carryl could commune with the Great Ones and listen to their mutterings, but she could find no words to describe them; instead Carryl could only find symbols that represented these utterings, comprehensible to human minds. If we think of these symbols are representing words of a language, we can therefore conclude that the Hunter's Mark is, quite literally, the Great One word for Hunter, as the same symbol is found on Carryl's own Hunter Rune. The uttering of a Great One, etched into one's mind. The symbol of a Hunter.

Hunter

This word, branded into one's mind, is what makes someone a Hunter. And not just any hunter, but a special hunter: a Paleblood Hunter, one bound to the Dreamlands. This Rune is what makes someone immortal, cursed to hunt and hunt and hunt until they are freed. We as players have this Mark branded into our minds. No matter how many times we die, we wake up again. Even if we fall off a cliff; we're cut in half; we're burned to death; we're killed by Frenzy; we're crushed by a monster; we die and die and die and die and die and die and die and die and die and even still we wake up once more. Even if we kill ourselves with the Chikage, or the Wheel, or the Whistle, or the Bloodletter, we wake up once more. There's only one way out for someone branded with the Hunter's Mark: to die by the hand of another branded Hunter.

As Gehrman settled into his new place in the Hunter's Dream, he found himself shackled and chained. There was no escape for Gehrman, the First Hunter. Trapped in a living hell, unable to die, unable to be granted mercy, Gehrman guided other Paleblood Hunters. When their hunts were over, Gehrman would end their life, freeing them from the wretched, tortuous existence of

eternal life. He granted them mercy. But where is the Hunter's Mark coming from?

As the player receives their first blood transfusion, they are attacked by a beast. But the beast turns to flames, and the Messengers arrive, crawling over the player. At that point, **something** took notice of the player. Something peered over them, and spoke a single word:

Hunter

With that uttering, they were reborn. Their life before the transfusion was irrelevant. They were now a weapon. They awaken into a new world, a new nightmare. They awaken into a Hunt.

Chapter Ten: The Paleblood Hunt

"Now, let's begin the transfusion. Oh, don't you worry. Whatever happens... you may think it all a mere bad dream..."
-Blood Minister

Normally, this is the part where I would tell you I'm going to use nothing but facts and evidence, and save all of my speculation until the very end. But we can't really do that in this part, can we? Instead, consider all of my previous writing to be the evidence we've gathered. I'll try to be as factual as possible and I will certainly try to leave as much of my speculation out as I can. But for the purposes of this essay, consider this last chapter to be purely my interpretation of the impossibly complex ending to Bloodborne. Use it for whatever you will. Accept it as fact, dismiss it as nonsense, or use it as the foundation for your own theories. I do however ask that you read to the end before choosing to comment, as this final chapter is the most confusing and the most speculative of my essay. Whatever you choose to do, use your mind to think. Master Willem would remind you that relying purely on pretension leads only to despair.

The Moon Presence; the secret Final Boss of Bloodborne. Of all significant beings and events in Bloodborne, this is the most mysterious. The Moon Presence has caused many players to leave Bloodborne with a feeling of discomfort, as if they came so close to the Truth and yet were still so far away. The Hunter encounters the Moon Presence if they refuse Gehrman's offer of mercy, and defeat him. The Moon Presence descends from the Blood Moon itself, even its name implies a deep connection to the Blood Moon. As we know, the Blood Moon rises whenever the line between man and beast is blurred. When humans succumb to the Scourge of the Beast, the Blood Moon rises... or perhaps it's the other way around. Perhaps it's that the Blood Moon rises, causing those infected with the Scourge to transform into Beasts. At the beginning of the game, we find a note in the back of the Hunter's Dream, presumably left for the Hunter: *"To escape this dreadful Hunter's Dream, halt the source of the spreading scourge of beasts, lest the night carry on forever."* Now recall Gehrman's words to the Hunter after the defeat of Father Gascoigne: *"The*

moon is close. It will be a long hunt tonight." The Blood Moon, or rather the Moon Presence, is the source of the Scourge.

The Beast exists within Humanity, it always has. The Byrgenwerth Scholar Carryl was the first to discover this during her commune with the Great Ones. According to the Clawmark Rune: *"The "Clawmark" is an impulse to seek the warmth of blood like a beast. It strengthens visceral attacks, one of the darker hunter techniques. Although the difference is subtle, Runesmith Caryll describes the "Beast" as a horrific and unwelcome instinct deep within the hearts of men, while "Clawmark" is an alluring invitation to accept this very nature."* But it wouldn't be until the work of a mysterious figure known as the Irreverent Izzy that Carryl's theories would be put into practice. His weapon of choice, the Beast Claw, states: *"As flesh is flayed and blood is sprayed, the beast within awakens, and in time, the wielder of this weapon surges with both strength and feverish reverie."* But while Izzy's claw is telling, it is the tool he designed known as the Beast Roar which is the most haunting: *"Borrow the strength of the terrible undead darkbeasts, if only for a moment, to blast surrounding foes back with the force of a roaring beast. The indescribable sound is broadcast with the caster's own vocal cords, which begs the question, what terrible things lurk deep within the frames of men?"*

The potential for evolution exists within humanity. But whether they will ascend to Gods or descend to Beasts is unclear. If the Moon Presence, the Blood Moon made Flesh, is indeed the source of the Scourge, than it can mean one of two things. The first possibility is likely the most outlandish and controversial, that being that the Moon Presence is the source of humanity, which in itself contains the Scourge of the Beast. The second, and I believe more likely scenario, is that while the Beast lies within all of humanity, it is not unless they are tainted by the Old Blood that they become susceptible to corruption and the Beast takes over. It is when the Blood Moon draws closer that those who have been infected with the Scourge will succumb to their inner, terrible nature and become monsters. But why? What does the Moon Presence want? Let's take a brief moment to look at the very bare bones of Bloodborne, the bare minimum that the player can accomplish in order to beat the game. Let's strip out absolutely

everything optional and give only the basic, necessary conditions in order to complete the hunt.

First, the Hunter awakens at Iosefka's clinic and travels to the Healing Church. Along the way they defeat Father Gascoigne, a Hunter who has succumb to the Scourge. Once at the Grand Cathedral of the Healing Church, the Hunter defeats Vicar Amelia, the former head of the Cathedral. Once Amelia is defeated the Hunter learns the password which will grant access to Byrgenwerth, the source of the Old Blood's discovery. With the password in hand, the Hunter travels to Byrgenwerth, along the way defeating the Shadows of Yharnam. Once at Byrgenwerth the Hunter discovers Rom, the Vacuous Spider, and slays her. With Rom's death, the gate to Yahar'gul is pried open and the Hunter travels into the Unseen Village. The Hunter defeats the One Reborn and locates the corpse of Micolash, using his body as a gateway to access the Nightmare.

In the Nightmare, the Hunter ascends Mergo's Loft, defeating Micolash's consciousness along the way, before coming to the Final Boss of the game: Mergo's Wet Nurse. A fully formed Great One, the Wet Nurse is a vicious enemy who rules over the Loft, and has claimed this section of the Dreamlands as her own. Upon the defeat of the Wet Nurse and the silence of the nightmare newborn's harrowing cry, the haunting words **NIGHTMARE SLAIN** blanket the screen. With the Wet Nurse's defeat, the Hunter returns to the Hunter's Dream to find the workshop burned to the ground. The Doll instructs the Hunter to meet with Gehrman, who meets them underneath an ancient tree. There, Gehrman congratulates the Hunter on a job well done: *"Good hunter, you've done well. The night is near its end. Now, I will show you mercy. You will die, forget the dream, and awake under the morning sun. You will be freed... from this terrible hunter's dream."* The Hunter turns and kneels before Gehrman, who rises from his chair for the first time and executes the Hunter. The Hunter awakens from their terrible Dream, weary and weakened, as the sun rises over Yharnam. The credits roll.

When described in this way Bloodborne seems to be a very linear, very simple game, doesn't it? Gehrman tasks the Hunter with killing Mergo. In order to do this, they must get to the

Nightmare. In order to get to the Nightmare, they need to get to Yahar'gul. In order to get to Yahar'gul, they need to get to Byrgenwerth. In order to get to Byrgenwerth, they need to get to the Healing Church. Getting to the Healing Church is the first objective the Hunter makes for themselves upon their initial meeting with Gilbert. What does the Moon Presence want? It's quite simple really: it wants to kill Mergo, and uses Gehrman to guide the Hunter into doing it. The Moon Presence, the Orphan, and the Wet Nurse are the only three fully formed Great Ones that the Hunter encounters. While the Hunter encounters the Amygdalae, as we've discussed previously it's not entirely clear if the Hunter ever truly fights or experiences the Amygdalae as they, or rather it, truly is. The Great Ones, beings of the Dreamlands, have their own motivations and their own goals. They are not allied with one another, just as all humans are not allied with one another.

"When the red moon hangs low, the line between man and beast is blurred. And when the Great Ones descend, a womb will be blessed with child." -Note found in the Byrgenwerth Mansion

Found in Byrgenwerth, this note is our first real indication that there is something far, far greater than just a hunt at stake in Yharnam. The phrasing of the note, is interesting however, as it describes a correlation. The red moon hangs low, and the line between man and beast is blurred. The Great Ones descend, and a womb is blessed with child. The order of the sentences make it seem as if first the Blood Moon rises, **and then** the Great Ones descend. But the note doesn't explicitly state that causality. Instead, what if it's the other way around? What if the Great Ones descend, and a womb is blessed with child, **and in response** the Blood Moon rises and the line between man and beast is blurred. For what purpose does the Blood Moon rise? Why is a Hunter chosen to be bound to the dream?

"Seek the nightmare newborn." -Unknown

This message appears rather strikingly, directly after Rom has died and the Blood Moon has risen. There is no source for the message; it is not spoken aloud nor is it given in the form of a note. It simply appears in the mind of the Hunter. A message and an instruction. Every Great One loses its child. But... **why** does every Great One lose its child? Perhaps this is what the Moon Presence desires, the death of infant Great Ones, using the Paleblood Hunters to accomplish this feat.

While the Great Ones' motivations and reasons for acting are far too inhuman for us to understand, they do have a very understandable goal. The most apparent goal they, just as every living creature before them, have, is to reproduce. "*Every Great One loses its child, and then yearns for a surrogate.*" The order of the sentence structure here is important. It is not as one would think, which is that the Great Ones yearn for a surrogate, that is to say a human mother to give birth to their child, and then lose their child as a result. This is most certainly what happens, but it is not their goal. Instead, every Great One loses its child, **and then** yearns for a surrogate. It is evidently very, very difficult for new Great Ones to be born. Mergo died in stillbirth, the Orphan never even had the chance to be born, and the Brain of Mensis was born deformed, rotten and helpless. Something always goes wrong with the birth of a Great One, and so the Great Ones find replacements for their lost children. We already know that this is not the first hunt, and that the Hunter is not the first in the Hunter's dream. There have been those before the Hunter who have come; the Blood Moon has risen in the past, and the Moon Presence has guided Hunters into completing its objectives through the use of Gehrman, its surrogate child. The two Hunters who we know went through this cycle were Djura the Retired Hunter and Eileen the Crow. Djura seems to remember little of the dream, only recalling it faintly: *"I no longer dream, but I was once a hunter, too."* Eileen however remembers much of it. If the Hunter attacks and dies to Eileen the Crow, she will chillingly ask the player: *"You still have dreams? Tell the little Doll I said hello..."* Think of how we experience dreams. Upon freshly waking up, we remember it vividly, especially if it was a nightmare. As the day progresses, details become fuzzier and eventually we can't remember the contents of the dream at all, only that we had a dream. Indeed, those who Gehrman executes in the Hunter's

dream awaken and slowly forget the details of their terrible, terrible nightmare. But they don't have to accept it.

If the Hunter refuses Gehrman's offer of mercy, they do battle against Gehrman. It is the Master and the Student, the Parent and Child, battling so that the former can be freed and the latter can overcome. With Gehrman, the Moon Presence's surrogate child defeated, the Moon Presence descends. Look at the way it curls around the Hunter, almost protectively. It lovingly embraces the Hunter, as a parent would a child. The screen fades to black, and we find the Doll pushing Gehrman's wheelchair. It is not Gehrman sitting on the chair however, but the Hunter, and as the credits roll we hear the doll utter *"And so the hunt begins again."* The Hunter has taken Gehrman's place as the surrogate child, but this is not the only option. The cycle does not need to continue. The hunt can be transcended.

"Seek Paleblood to transcend the hunt."

It's a handwritten note found in the very first room in the game, the room in which the Hunter awakens in Iosefka's clinic. As evidenced by the Foreign Garb the Hunter is wearing upon their awakening, the Hunter remembers nothing prior to their transfusion: *"Not typical clothing for Yharnam, perhaps it is of foreign origin. It is said, after all, the traveler came to Yharnam from afar. Without memory, who will ever know?"* Without memory, the Hunter discovers this note and naturally the player forms a goal in their mind: Seek Paleblood to transcend the hunt. But what is Paleblood? The Hunter apparently asks Gilbert this very question, to which he responds: "*Paleblood, you say? Hmm... Never heard of it. But if it's blood you're interested in, you should try the Healing Church.*" Gilbert himself admits he isn't very knowledgeable on Blood Ministration, and directs you to try the Church. The Healing Church, however, has absolutely no record anywhere of Paleblood. Other than the conversation with Gilbert there are only four references to Paleblood anywhere in the entire game. The first reference is the note found in the beginning of the game.

The second reference is a note by an unknown author, found in Yahar'gul: *"Behold! A Paleblood Sky!"* The note is pointed towards the moon, and if encountered prior to the death of Rom is fairly

confusing. After Rom's death, when the Blood Moon rises and the sky twists into a Nightmare, the note makes much, much more sense. *"The color of the sky after you defeat the Vacuous Spider and the Mensis secret ritual is revealed. The sky there is a very pale blue, like a body drained of blood."* This quote from Miyazaki discusses the sky that has been revealed once the veil between the Waking World and the Dreamlands has been torn apart.

The third reference to Paleblood is found in the Nightmare Lecture Hall, as part of a series of notes: *"The nameless moon presence beckoned by Laurence and his associates. Paleblood."*
In Miyazaki's interview he murmurs that *"Right, that's another interpretation. 'Paleblood' is another name for the monster that comes from the moon."* The Moon Presence, the Paleblood Great One. But as Miyazaki notes, there is more than one interpretation for Paleblood. Paleblood is not a single concept, but an overarching theme of Bloodborne.

There's another reference to Paleblood in the game, one that some players probably forget about as it occurs so early in the game.

"*Oh, yes... Paleblood... Well, you've come to the right place. Yharnam is the home of blood ministration. You need only unravel its mystery.*" -Blood Minister

It's the very first sentence uttered in the entire game, by the doctor who ministers the Hunter's first blood transfusion. This doctor is credited simply as the Blood Minister. Let's take a moment to pause in our analysis of Bloodborne and instead go over something very, very simple: What is blood?

I am not a doctor, nor will I pretend to be. As such I am likely vastly oversimplifying things, so take my explanation with a grain of salt. Blood consists of three distinct ingredients. First are Erythrocytes, typically referred to as Red Blood Cells. Red blood cells travel through the body of a human being and distribute oxygen to the body's tissues. Red blood cells are the primary means of life support and nutrition for the body's tissues. Second is Plasma. Approximately half of blood is plasma, a liquid that serves as means of transportation for the blood cells which carry

out their task in supporting the human body. When blood is centrifuged to separate the ingredients, we find something very interesting about plasma. Plasma that has been separated from clotting proteins and blood cells is actually an amber, light yellow color. This liquid is referred to as Serum, or sometimes *pure blood* as it is the liquid blood in itself without any other ingredients. The third ingredient of blood are the Leukocytes, or White Blood Cells. White blood cells exist as part of the human body's immune system; they attack infectious invaders, foreign substances, and clean after old and dead cell structures.

Blood is such a central theme in Bloodborne, everything revolves around Blood, even the title. **Especially** the title. Bloodborne. A bloodborne pathogen, a disease of the blood, this is what the Scourge of the Beast is. It's an infection, a disease that spreads from person to person through the transfusion of blood. Master Willem sternly reminds Laurence that: "*We are born of the blood. Made men by the blood. Undone by the blood.*" The scourge infects the victim by attacking and tainting their blood, corrupting them. Now look at the Kin, ascended mortals who have become Kin of the Cosmos. They have escaped the taint of the Scourge, moving past it. Indeed they bleed a clear, amber liquid; serum, to be exact. The Kin of the Cosmos have cleansed their blood of the tainted scourge, separating it from the other ingredients and becoming pure beings. And finally we have white blood cells, **pale** blood cells. The white blood cells are the body's immune system. They seek out the infection and destroy it. But it's the way they destroy infections that fascinates me so. White blood cells grow and consume the infection, bringing it within themselves and isolating it in such a matter. The parallels to to the PC Hunter are striking. *"Seek Paleblood to transcend the hunt."* Maybe this isn't a note for the player at all. Maybe it's a note for the Blood Minister.

Djura likely suffered from a terrible, incurable disease. It's possible that Djura suffered from a type of terminal anemia, meaning that he had a significant deficiency of iron in his bloodstream and that he had much less haemoglobin in his red blood cells. Anemia was a rather serious problem in the Victorian Era, typically affecting young women. It would become known as the Virgin's Disease, and would be associated with a terrible paleness of the skin. The lack of hemoglobin meant the red blood

cells carried much less nutrients throughout the bloodstream; the blood was a pale, sickly color, and the skin followed suit. Those who suffered from anemia would be sickly, tired, and weak. And so Djura's doctor discovered someone whose red blood was pale, who carried the antibodies and the potential to battle the Scourge of the Beast. He discovered a Paleblood. When the Paleblood was treated with the Old Blood, they were reborn as a Hunter, and not just any hunter but a special one. The Hunter's Mark was branded in the mind of the Paleblood Hunter, connecting them to the Hunter's Dream and forcing them into servitude. But Djura would not become strong enough to overcome the Moon Presence. He was executed by Gehrman, his connection to the Hunter's Dream severed. Later, Gehrman would find a new apprentice in a sick woman from the hinterlands, Eileen the Crow, but again the Paleblood would fail. Gehrman can be found muttering in his sleep, almost whimpering: *"Oh Laurence... what's taking you so long... I've grown too old for this, or little use now, I'm afraid."* An even more chilling message can be heard, though the trigger for the dialogue is currently unknown: *"Oh Laurence... Master Willem... Somebody help me... Unshackle me please, anybody... I've had enough of this dream... The night blocks all sight... Oh, somebody, please."* Gehrman is desperate for Laurence and the art of Blood Ministration to find someone who can put an end to the nightmare, who can find a Paleblood strong enough to become immune to the taint of the Great Ones. The PC arrives at Yharnam.

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Here, they meet the Blood Minister. After the transfusion, the Paleblood has become a Hunter. Recall the very beginning of the game in which a Scourge Beast rises from the blood and closes towards the player. Upon touching the player, the Scourge Beast immediately bursts into flames. It can't touch you, because the very first transfusion is coursing through your veins and creating the antibodies required to battle the Scourge. And then, the Messengers come. This brings us to the last mystery, or rather, the last mystery we'll be talking about. Gehrman isn't the only denizen of the Hunter's Dream. There are others. The Messengers

are strange, little creatures that venerate and worship the Hunters. The other denizen is the Doll.

It's funny really, when the player first starts playing Bloodborne they have no idea what rules the world works by. They don't know what is possible or impossible. Upon speaking with the Doll it simply becomes something accepted. "Oh, so there's a talking Doll, of course there is." They don't question it, nor do they consider how it came to be, it's just accepted as an occurrence of the world. But sit down to think about the Doll for a moment, and it becomes painfully clear she is so much more than a Doll. Magic doesn't exist in Bloodborne. There are no wizards, no sorcerers. There are humans, and there are Great Ones, godlike beings capable of acts which we can only consider to be magic as they are too complex for us to understand the workings; some humans have learned to use the power of the Great Ones in small and limited forms but they are not Wizards, they are Scholars and Madmen. To avoid beating around the bush, **Gehrman cannot animate a Doll. So how did it come to life?** We know that Gehrman had a deep love and care for the Doll, based upon the obsession for his student Maria. The Doll Clothes tell us: *"A deep love for the doll can be surmised by the fine craftsmanship of this article, and the care with which it was kept."* Let us again refer back to the Tear Blood Gem: *"Created from a shining silver doll tear, this blood gem is a quiet but unfaltering friend that continually restores HP, the life essence of a hunter. Perhaps the doll's creator had wished for just such a friend, albeit in vain."*

If the Hunter locates the Abandoned Old Workshop in the Waking World, they find a couple of things. They find the Old Hunter's Bone, the doll set... but most importantly, they find a Cord of the Eye. *""Every Great One loses its child, and then yearns for a surrogate. The Third Umbilical Cord precipitated the encounter with the pale moon, which beckoned the hunters and conceived the hunter's dream."* The word *conceived* is very important here. The Oxford English Dictionary gives the word *conceive* two different meanings. The first is as follows: **Form a mental representation of; imagine.** This is the first definition the player infers from the context of the sentence. However the other definition is as follows: **Become pregnant with.** Considering how much of Bloodborne is centered around

birth, rebirth, pregnancy, and motherhood, I find it very hard to believe that the use of the word 'conceive' in the Cord of the Eye is purely accidental. Gehrman was terribly alone and terribly miserable in his isolation. All of the Cords of the Eye are found from women; one from the Wet Nurse, one from Arianna, and one from Iosefka. The exception to this rule is the one found in the Workshop, until you consider that it's found directly next to a woman. Not a human woman perhaps, but a **doll of one.** Perhaps in Gehrman's madness and his love of the doll that was his only companion, the Great Ones took notice. After all, the Great Ones that inhabit the nightmare are sympathetic in spirit.

In his desperation and longing for his beloved Maria, Gehrman was willing to give up anything in exchange to get her back. When a Great One promised to bring her to life, Gehrman signed away his life into servitude. But the Doll was not Maria. What is the Doll? What is it really? What manner of being is it, a thinking and feeling creature inhabiting an artificial body? And why, sitting in the altar at the Old Abandoned Workshop, the place where Gehrman signed away his life to servitude of the Great Ones, is there the umbilical cord of a Great One, a Cord of the Eye?

Let's pause for a moment to take a look at what we now know as the Winter Lanterns. The Winter Lanterns are, as any player who has braved the Nightmare full well knows, one of, if not **the**, most absolute dangerous enemies to be found in Bloodborne. The Winter Lanterns are tall, lanky women singing out of tune, covered in bloody rags; they have no head, instead they have a large brain covered with eyes that blink and dart in a full circle around them. Extending from their brains are tentacles which they use to grab the Hunter and hold them still. On their own, the Winter Lanterns are not particularly hard to deal with. What makes them so dangerous is that making even the briefest eye contact with the Winter Lanterns causes an uncontrollable rise of Frenzy which quickly does massive damage to the Hunter. But what is *Frenzy?* Frenzy is a status effect that occurs whenever the Hunter comes into contact with the intense concept of the Great Ones. The Amygdalae cause Frenzy by grasping the Hunter and forcing them to look into their eyes. The Celestial Larvae, Ebrietas, and the Maneater Boars cause Frenzy by vomiting on the Hunter. The Gardens of Eyes cause Frenzy by leaping up and

grasping the Hunter by their head, clinging to them and filling their ears with a mind-piercing, high pitched ringing noise. The Cathedral Watchers can inflict Frenzy by wielding a wooden cross twisted into a symbol of the Great Ones, which glows a dark crimson. The Winter Lanterns cause Frenzy simply by looking at the Hunter.

From this information we can gather that Frenzy is a condition which occurs when an individual is forcibly made to wrap their minds around the eldritch nature of the Cosmos and the Great Ones. To put it another way: Insight is what happens when an individual slowly learns, discovers, and processes the information of the Great Ones. Frenzy is what happens when an individual is **forced** to process the information.

The Winter Lanterns' Frenzy attack is so powerful that many players do not even bother engaging them. They run past, desperately hiding from the Lanterns as they sing their song. Whatever you do, **don't look at them**. The game even provides mechanics for this, providing ways around them or cliffs that the Hunter can slide along or sneak underneath to prevent having to look at the Winter Lanterns. Because of this, the majority of players never take a good look at the Winter Lanterns; they are an enemy that revolves around avoiding looking at them. The Winter Lanterns' existence went relatively unexplained until a player with the username chim_cheree managed to snatch a hi-resolution screenshot of one of the Winter Lanterns close up. She came to a horrifying realization as she took a good, long look at the Winter Lanterns: They're wearing the Doll's clothes... The comparison between the Winter Lantern's bloody rags and the Doll's clothing is disturbing, to say the least. While the Lantern's clothing is covered with blood and they are not wearing the shawl that the Doll has over her shoulders, every other piece of clothing matches. The sleeves, the ruffles, the skirt, the seams, they all match **perfectly**. This discovery was just the tip of the iceberg as players instantly began working to gather more screenshots of the Winter Lanterns and really take a good, close look at them. While it's difficult to tell, many players point to the grooves in their clawed hands as being indicative of the Doll's familiar jointed fingers. This discovery had me incredibly, incredibly excited. Just like everyone else, I was racing to get a picture of the Winter

Lanterns for my own look. But when I took a picture of the brain lined with eyes that the Lanterns have instead of a head, I discovered something... well, something incredible. It may be shaped like a brain, but it's not composed of the familiar grey matter which we associate with brains. It's not composed of anything human at all. I, like a few other people, discovered that it's not a brain at all. **It's the Messengers.** *"Ahh, the little ones, inhabitants of the dream... They find hunters like yourself, worship, and serve them. Speak words, they do not, but still, aren't they sweet?"* The brains of the Winter Lanterns are comprised of Messenger corpses bound and meshed together into a single form.

There's something just madly genius about it. The one enemy in the game who can give us the most horrible, terrifying Truth just by looking at it is the one enemy we want nothing more than to look away from. Of **course** the Winter Lanterns cause Frenzy. How could we not go insane by looking upon the twisted form of the one being in the entire world who can offer us comfort and warmth? How could our minds possibly comprehend the terrible realization that the Doll is linked so closely to these horrible creatures?

Have you ever attacked the Doll? I mean really, really attacked the Doll. I mean taking a Cleaver and **hacking** the Doll to pieces. Many players must be sick at the thought, how could you possibly attack the one being who provides you with comfort throughout the horror of Bloodborne? Well if you attack the Doll, you might notice that she bleeds. Her blood is not red, like the humans or the Great Ones. Her blood also isn't serum, like the Kin of the Cosmos. Her blood is white. Almost like bleach, the Doll bleeds a **pale blood**. Bizarrely enough, taking a close look at the Messengers will reveal something very similar. When the Messengers leave a note behind, did you know they actually rise up from blood? Of course you did. When it's a Specter, it's the familiar red bloodstain. But when it's a note... it's pure white, blood of the Messengers and blood of the Doll. If the Hunter kills the Doll, the next time the Hunter returns to the Dream they will find her standing there. *"Hello, good hunter. I am a doll, here in this dream to look after you."* She doesn't remember us...

"Over time, countless hunters have visited this dream. The graves here stand in their memory. It all seems so long ago now..."

Countless Hunters? That doesn't make sense at all. So long ago? It wasn't really all that long ago... Gehrman has only been imprisoned for at most possibly 100 years or so. As for the known Palebloods, I can count them on one hand: Djura, Eileen, and the Player. We do know however, that the Blood Moon has risen in the past. In ancient Pthumeru, the people succumbed to the Scourge of Beasts. What if there haven't been only four Blood Moons? What if there have been hundreds? What if over the past thousands, tens of thousands, **hundreds** of thousands of years, the Blood Moon has risen and Hunters have entered the Dream, the Hunter's Mark branded in their minds, before falling and succumbing to the Moon Presence? It's part of a cycle, and the Doll has been there.

Many players have encountered the Doll sleeping in the Dream. When they wake her she will gasp, apologize for having drifted off, and will return to offering her normal dialogue. But there's another situation the Hunter can find the Doll in. Sometimes, very rarely, the Doll will be found kneeling before a grave.

"O Flora, of the moon, of the dream. O little ones, O fleeting will of the ancients... Let the hunter be safe, let him find comfort. And let this dream, his captor... foretell a pleasant awakening... be, one day, a fond, distant memory..."

If the Hunter interrupts her she will awaken, startled, and apologize for having drifted off into sleep. She will not remember the words she spoke.

Maybe she wasn't always a Doll; maybe she's had a hundred different shapes and forms, but she was there as the Palebloods struggled against the Moon Presence. Maybe, a long long time ago, she was even a Maiden in Black. Recall how we discussed the manner in which white blood cells destroy infections: they consume them. Upon first meeting the Hunter, she tells us: *"You will hunt beasts... and I will be here for you, to embolden your sickly spirit.*" **Sickly.** Her white blood only further supports this metaphor, as she strengthens our immunity to the Scourge and grants us power.

The Paleblood Hunter defeats the Moon Presence by consuming the Cords of the Eye and the Ancient Blood Echoes, becoming too powerful and immune to its influence. The Great One that has haunted humanity since its conception falls.

NIGHTMARE SLAIN

We are left with the Doll, reaching down to grasp us in our new form. Remember that the Great Ones are not all of the same faction, of the same species, or even of the same ideology. The Great Ones are unique in their desires and their eldritch wishes, incomprehensible to us mere human beasts. Having consumed the Scourge and the Great Ones, we have ascended and been born anew, ready to bring Humanity into its next evolutionary stage. And it's all thanks to the Doll. The Doll, who nurtured us, emboldened us, strengthened, and cared for us. The Doll cradles us in a motherly fashion, giggling.

"Are you cold? Oh, Good Hunter."

Perhaps not every Great One loses its child after all.